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Editorial

An interesting development in the cinema of the past few years, which has not been sufficiently appreciated in Britain, has been a revival of interest in history and how the past is remembered and represented. The phenomenon is exceedingly diverse, comprehending as it does work as varied as that of Bertolucci, Angelopoulos, Syberberg, Marcel Ophuls and Ken Loach and Tony Garnett, and simply to use the term history is perhaps to miscognise it. But it remains the case that certain themes – those of Fascism and resistance, of popular struggles and ‘history from below’ – and certain historiographic concerns – can we write ‘our’ history, rather than ‘theirs’? – have emerged with peculiar insistence in countries as politically diverse as West Germany and Italy, Hungary and Greece. Implicated in this movement of exploring and reassessing the past is the contradictory configuration of the political present – not just, as is suggested elsewhere in this issue, the aftermath of May ’68, but the problems of social democracy, of the Communist Parties and of contemporary Fascism.

Paradoxically (at first sight) this revival of interest in history coincides with a crisis of confidence in the term history itself, a crisis which threatens to invest not just simple historicist notions of the past as cause of the present but the validity of historical inquiry as such. The problems raised by this troublesome conjunction, and of how historical inscription can be carried out without collapsing into a self-validating mythology of historical ‘truth’, provided a major focus of discussion at the Special Event on ‘History/Production/Memory’ at the 1977 Edinburgh Film Festival. In his article in this issue, a revised version of a paper given at Edinburgh,* Keith Tribe argues that traditional representations of history on film are often not so much inaccurate as tautological, involving a specious mode of authentication of their own discourse in which the past guarantees the present and vice versa. Against this procedure, most notably exemplified by *Days of Hope*,

* Other papers for the event are to be found in the *Edinburgh 77 Magazine*

- 6 he argues for a recognition of the way historical discourses are constructed out of the demands of contemporary struggles.

Parallel with Tribe's arguments, Mark Nash and Steve Neale concern themselves, in their report on the event, with the different ways in which the debate at Edinburgh articulated the relations between cinema and history as, variously, history of cinema, history in cinema, and cinema in history, and draw conclusions for future work on these different articulations. They also discuss the Straub/Huillet film *Fortini/Canì* as an example of a filmic discourse constructed around different registers of history and memory.

The same Edinburgh Festival saw the inauguration, coexistent with the Film Festival proper, of a television festival or event. Reporting on it, John Caughie takes the opportunity to pinpoint a number of issues arising both out of the debates at Edinburgh and out of the need for SEFT to engage, practically and theoretically, with the television 'institution'. Principal among the questions raised is the nature of the institution itself as state apparatus and as locus of signifying practice and the production of meanings. While one evident need, which SEFT and its journals are working to supply, is simply for more theoretical and empirical work on what the institution is and how it operates, it is also the case, Caughie argues, that a strategy has to be developed for working with or within the institution. The *Screen* Readers Meeting in October called to discuss Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow's article on *World in Action* (*Screen* v 18 n 2, Summer 1977) marked a tentative step in this direction, as did the SEFT weekend school on Television and the State in November and the Potteries Group weekend on *Coronation Street* in December. But further advance is dependent on being able to locate exposed points of contradiction around which debate can be engaged. It is to be hoped (though it is by no means certain) that Edinburgh will provide a context for such debate in future.

Apart from Edinburgh and its ramifications, much of the rest of this issue is taken up with the presentation of a concept which has acquired considerable currency in recent writing on the cinema – that of suture. As the use of the term has spread it has diverged markedly not just from its far-off origins in surgery but from the sense given it in Lacanian psychoanalysis. We print here in translation (apologising for the difficult prose, which is not the fault of the translators) the paper by Jacques-Alain Miller which gives the first systematic account of the concept in relation to psychoanalytic theory and the logic of the signifier, and the article by Jean-Pierre Oudart which first explored the concept in relation to cinema. In a commentary which follows the two translated articles, Stephen Heath attempts to put them in context, not only historically but in terms of the conceptual field which suture traces, that of the relation of the subject to 'its' discourse and the inscription of discourse in ideology.

The problematic as set out in Heath's article is one with which *Screen* has become increasingly identified in the past few years, and which the magazine will continue to explore. Meanwhile a word of warning is sounded by a group of writers from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University. In response to Rosalind Coward's article (*Screen* v 18 n 1, Spring 1977) in which aspects of the Centre's work were criticised, they contest the compatibility between the Marxist problematic as they understand it and the sort of work on signification that *Screen* has promoted. While accepting that at the moment there is something of an uneasy fit between classical Marxism and contemporary theories of discourse and the subject, we do not see this unproductive, far from it. The danger comes when Procrustean attempts are made, on whichever side, to compress one set of problems into the other.

Finally, I should like to take this occasion to inform readers that this is the last editorial I shall be writing for *Screen*, since I shall shortly be leaving the editorship of the magazine to concentrate on other work.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

SCREEN EDUCATION

Number 22, Spring 1977

Special Number on Popular Culture and Education, with articles by Manuel Alvarado, Richard Collins, Bob Ferguson, Jim Grealy, Fred Hunter, Colin McArthur, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Colin Sparks, Roy Stafford.

Number 23, Summer 1977

Special Number on Images and Representation, with articles by Andrew Bethell and Michael Silve, Mike Catto, Elizabeth Cowie, Trevor Millum, Jim Pines and John Tulloch.

Number 24, Autumn 1977

Articles by Victor Burgin, Gill Davies, Christine Gledhill, Griselda Pollock, Philip Simpson and SEFT's response to the Annan Report.

Number 25, Winter 1975/76

Articles on education and the media by Susan Bennett, Phillip Drummond, Bob Ferguson, Douglas Lowndes, Dave Lusted, Philip Simpson.

For subscriptions and prices, see page 2.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Applications are invited from suitably qualified postgraduates for a limited number of places (full or part-time) on the course leading to the University of London M.Phil. in Film Studies. Reading knowledge of French and one other language besides English normally required. Applicants should note that this course does not provide professional training.

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SEFT Day School

SEFT and the London Film-makers' Coop have organised a number of events, the first of which 'Introduction to the Avantgarde and Narrative', will be held on Saturday, February 4 at the Coop, 42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1 from 10.30 am-5.30 pm. The event will be structured around brief presentations, screenings and general discussions of films by Brakhage, Warhol, Sharits and Snow. Numbers will be restricted to 45. The cost of the event is £1.50 (£1 to full-time students and to other students who are without full-time employment), which covers film hire and tea/coffee. If you wish to attend please send the fee to SEFT (students should enclose a photocopy of their student card). Acknowledgement of the fee will include a short reading list but there will be no papers for this event.

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29 Old Compton Street
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History and the Production of Memories*

Keith Tribe

In recent years the writing and re-writing of a new kind of history – social history – has been taken up by radicals engaged with 'labour history' in general, and perhaps more significantly by women who seek to promote the development of a feminist consciousness through the construction of a 'womens history'. These two threads are of course interconnected; E P Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*, which was in many ways the turning point of British labour history in the 1960s, itself set the pattern for the women's history that was to follow. Much of the importance of Thompson's work concerned the unearthing of popular movements that had been previously ignored in traditional histories, sometimes because on the one hand these dispersed and anonymous insurrectionary groups left no records with which the historian could work, while perhaps more often it was considered that such subterranean movements did not warrant or repay close attention. Thompson sought quite explicitly to 'give the people back their history' – a history of their oppression and resistance to oppression.

Sheila Rowbotham, perhaps one of the foremost of contemporary feminist historians, was herself a student of Thompson's, and has produced a series of works which seek to demonstrate that women have been systematically ignored in the male-dominated writings of historical investigation. Thus the title of one of her books is *Hidden from History*, a book in which she seeks to show that History has been constituted as a narrative in which women are at most merely useful appendages to the agents of history, men

* This paper is an extensively revised version of my introductory talk at the Edinburgh Film Festival Special Event this year. I would like to thank Liz Brown for her criticism and help in making the revisions.

- 10 of the ruling and of the working class. By the discovery of the activities of militant women of the past, she seeks to give the contemporary women's movement a sense of the historicity of its action, giving the struggles of women today a heritage which has been suppressed and distorted in the history that is given to them.¹

Such work is of course politically very important in building an articulate and militant progressive womens movement, but it is often forgotten that this 'history' is itself only constituted as a response to the histories that it opposes. While it is important to reveal the existence of past struggles, such revelation provides no effects of itself. To ignore this danger is to fall into the trap of endlessly discovering 'new' struggles, an endless quest for the dead heroines of the past. But these female persons are of course only heroic on the condition that their actions can 'teach us' about our actions today; and consequently such actions are reworked in the image of contemporary concerns. For example, Rowbotham places great weight on the work of Stella Browne in the 1920s for the causes of birth control and abortion on demand;² but the condition for such emphasis is not the significance and effectivity of Browne's work, but rather that the statements that Browne made are of relevance to contemporary campaigns. It has been argued on the other hand by Aileen Kraditor that it is not enough to simply recover these statements to write a progressive women's history: more important is the specification of the conditions under which historical demands could be realised, assessing the effectivity and organisation of political movements of the past and not simply recording their presence.³ The 'lessons of history' are not inscribed in the simple existence of a past; they are the product of the construction of a history which can be deployed in contemporary arguments.

1. It is not being suggested here that these two forms of 'social history' are recent developments, nor that they form the basis of all contemporary work; these two authors are deployed here as representatives of a certain style of historical work, and while the writing of Thompson and Rowbotham has been influential in the reformation of radical historiography and its use in Britain, recent work has moved beyond the positions that they established. Martha Macintyre for example argues in a recent (unpublished) paper on Australian feminist historians that the attempt to write a history for Australian women relies too heavily on an ex-colonialist historiography that in certain areas treats its sources uncritically; it is important to stress that 'radical' work as any other should be subjected to as critical a scrutiny as more 'orthodox' histories.

2. S Rowbotham, *Hidden from History*, London, Pluto Press, 1973, p 152 ff; see also the same author's *A New World for Women: Stella Browne, Socialist Feminist*, Pluto, 1977.

3. A S Kraditor, 'American Radical Historians on their Heritage', *Past and Present* n 56 (1972), pp 136-53.

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The Special Film Event at Edinburgh this year placed itself in the context of such debates, deploying as its title the words 'History/Production/Memory' to designate a series of issues around film, cinema and history. In particular, discussions and film showings centred around the debate on Popular Memory which had been printed in issues of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. This debate concerns itself with many of the problems that have been raised in the work of Thompson and Rowbotham, who can be taken as representatives of two currents of recent historical research. And of course in the case of womens history, with its problems and possibilities, the TV series *Shoulder to Shoulder* can be seen as an attempt to realise filmically the history of women's struggles.

The title of the event – 'History/Production/Memory' – might have been arrived at almost by accident, but it is in fact surprisingly appropriate as an index of the problems associated with the Popular Memory debate. For this series of terms embodies a theoretical problem, a transitivity that expresses two quite distinct conceptions of history and the status of historical argument. This title can be read as a double transformation, from history to memory, and from memory to history, both instances mediated by the presence of a work of production, the means of travelling from one term to the other and back again.

If we travel from left to right, as it were, a conception is exposed in which history is seen as a collection of past events, incidents, significations, persons and so on. By a work of production we move to the presence of a memory, the trace of this history in the present: a trace which is recorded in the utterances of persons and in the constitution of commemorative events. 'Production' here is primarily a work of recovery, the kind of activity that is associated popularly with women's history and radical labour history. But it must be noted that the conception of 'history' that we have here is a double one: it is at the same time the past, a collection of representations ascribed a prior existence, and also the process of its writing. 'History' thus denotes a non-discursive past and a discursive present. This double form conspires to render these two elements mutually validating: the past informs and underwrites the validity of the present, and the writings on the past are guaranteed by their very involvement with the past. The past is history, and the writing of history is thus endowed with an autonomous effectivity. History not only exists, it is truth: the truth of past experience, and the truth of present historical accounts of it. To learn lessons from the past, it is necessary only to unlock this truth.

If on the other hand we travel from right to left in this title, a quite different set of relationships appears. Beginning with memory, a work of production takes us to the past as history. This work of production is no longer a work of discovery, of revelation, but is rather a process in which specific materials are

12 combined together and used to *fabricate* a history. This 'fabricated history' is not thereby false, nor erroneous; what is of importance is that its principles of validation have become disconnected from the simple existence of a prior chronology. Put simply, this conception is an anti-historicist one, denying that the past through its existence and transcription is a principle of validity in itself. The first position that was outlined assumes that History is something that is real and tangible, that can be effectively recapitulated, discovered, or of course distorted; but whatever the modality, it is and always will be. This fact of existence is the guardian of truth and the subverter of error. In the case of much womens history, traditional accounts are denounced for having omitted in a systematic manner female historical agents. The restoration of such agents into history is an act which restores the truth to historical discourse.

Anti-historicism abandons the past as a principle of validation which dominates all other concerns; it instead argues that 'history' is something perpetually constructed in a specific conjuncture, and that it is necessary to pose to historical discourse the question – what does it do? What arguments does it support, in what manner does it constitute its mode of proof, in what way is its evidence deployed? The conditions of production of history are not the acts of revelation of a past, but are determinate relations in a given conjuncture. A history must therefore be assessed according to the manner in which it is constituted. Such a position enables the question to be asked: why bother with history/the past? When Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst posed this question in the final chapter of their *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, it was often assumed that this question by its very existence constituted a rejection of all forms of historical work. Anti-historicism therefore became associated with a rejection of history, a position which under certain conditions can of course be made to look absurd. The point at issue is however quite different. As has been suggested, the object of the new working-class and women's history was above all a political one: to strengthen the movements within which they appeared by giving political demands a historical validity. The conditions for such work being effective are not however universal, and it cannot be supposed that to work on popular history is of itself politically progressive. In fact it can be argued that in certain cases such work could be at present diversionary. Anti-historicism does not attack history for the sake of it; it is a means of arguing that the political objectives of theoretical investigations have to be radically re-assessed. By arguing that the past is not an object of study it is possible to question the political validity of historical research which too often appears as its own guarantor.

These questions of 'history' are central to the idea of a cinematic modality called 'popular memory'. Distinct from the

contemporary concern with the past, a concern which is associated 13
with a nostalgic recovery of the past through a recreation of its
paraphernalia, the notion of Popular Memory seeks to fix those
films which use history in the construction of their narrative,
drawing on the facticity of the past to assure the veracity of their
statements. The term appeared first in 1974 when Foucault was
interviewed by the editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, an interview
which has appeared in *Radical Philosophy* and which is reprinted
in the *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*. The films under discussion were
principally *Lacombe Lucien*, *Night Porter*, and *The Sorrow and the
Pity*, films which were seen by the *Cahiers* interviewers as the
product of a specific political conjuncture in France, in which a
new bourgeoisie sought to write its own history. This history seeks
to deny the existence of popular struggle as an important factor
in the national history. As Foucault says:

' There's a battle for and around history going on at this very
moment which is extremely interesting. The intention is to
re-programme, to stifle what I've called the " popular memory ";
and also to propose and impose on people a framework in which
to interpret the present. Up to 1968, popular struggles were
part of folklore. For some people, they weren't even part of their
immediate concept of reality. After 1968, every popular struggle,
whether in South America or Africa, has found some echo, some
sympathetic response. So it's no longer possible to keep up their
separation, this geographical " cordon sanitaire ". Popular struggles
have become for our society, not part of the actual, but of the
possible. So they have to be set at a distance. How? Not by
providing a direct interpretation, which would be asking to be
exposed. But by offering an historical interpretation of those
popular struggles which have occurred in France in the past, in
order to show that they never really happened.'⁴

Film, argues Foucault, is deployed to immobilise popular struggle
by rewriting the history of these struggles. Here, and in the case of
I, Pierre Rivière . . ., as will be seen below, Foucault adopts a
historicist position quite at variance with his established theoretical
position, which is resolutely anti-historicist; the consequence of
such a relapse can be seen in the emergence of a constitutive class-
subject in the quotation above, together with a conspiratorial con-

4. ' Michel Foucault: Interview ', *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, p 24. It
might be added here of course that the use of history in the writings
of leftist historians is quite distinct from the ' writing of history ' in the
films of leftist film-makers. In the case of the former, the use of history
is directly related to the problems and tasks of a specific political move-
ment; for the latter, the association with specific political work is always
much more indirect, and cannot be read off from the film itself. The
politics of a film are not simply inscribed in its images and narrative,
but in its form of circulation.

14 ception of politics. *The Sorrow and the Pity* is indeed a powerful vehicle for the construction of histories. The popular memory of wartime France is demolished by a historical document which persuasively argued that little resistance took place and large sections of the population collaborated with the German occupation forces. This can be seen at work in Ophuls's film very clearly: interviews of persons today which describe their recollections of life under the occupation are contrasted with other accounts from wartime newspapers and German records of occupation which discredit their mode of recollection. Ophuls's use of the extended interview in combination with archive film permits a series of representations to be contrasted, and in so doing the 'evidence' offered by interview is severely questioned. Ophuls does not rewrite the history of wartime France, as Foucault suggests; what he does is rather question the use that is made of personal recollection. The subversive nature of Ophuls's film lies not in the 'new memory' but in the demonstration of the way that memory is subjected to reconstruction.

Ophuls's film is an instance of the *reorganisation*, rather than the *employment*, of a popular memory. The effect on French attitudes to the war is similar to the effect of Angus Calder's *Peoples War*, a book which does much to reorganise the traditional views of Britain under the Blitz, and in particular emphasises the low credibility of Churchill at particular points in the war. Calder shows how for example the Battle of Alamein has become enshrined as a turning point in Britain's war not because of its actual military significance, but rather because it could be used to restore confidence in the existing political order headed by Churchill. It is perhaps ironic that Montgomery, the 'hero of Alamein', has become in the recent film *A Bridge Too Far* the 'villain of Arnhem', a central point of the film not noted by any of the film critics in their reviews. The problem however with Foucault's criticisms of Ophuls is that it is suggested that his film constitutes an act of theft: the real experience of the historical agents of resistance has been taken away from their heirs. The political consequences of Ophuls's film are seen as the triumph of the new bourgeoisie over a working class deprived of its heritage.

Other films of course seek to restore this heritage, and in the work of restoration promote the kind of historical work in the medium of film that was outlined at the beginning of this article. The Loach/Garnett television series *Days of Hope* represents such an attempt to use working-class history politically, deploying in a documentary play arguments about political organisation and the relation of leftist groupings to established political institutions.⁵ This series relies on conventions of realism to construct a historical

5. I would like to express my thanks to John Caughie whose own work on *Days of Hope* stimulated many of the following observations.

drama which is located in the years 1916-1926. Central to the films as a mode of organisation is a family and its trials and tribulations, and in many ways this series depends on the genre of family romance to present its plot (much like the series *Poldark*, for instance).⁶ The comments that are made here will address themselves to problems that emerge in Episodes 1 and 3. 15

In the first episode we are introduced to a simple wartime country scene, a small family farm run by a father with his son Ben and his daughter Sarah. Ben is anxious to join the army, but is too young; his sister Sarah is married to a conscientious objector, Philip Hargreaves, contrasted with Ben imaginatively not only as an opponent of the war but also as a town dweller unused to the heavy labour of the farm. Philip and Sarah have to leave, for the police are after Philip. The meal taken before they leave is effectively unscripted, full of hesitations and uncertain statements; one of the devices used in this series is to use actors without comprehensive scripts, so that conversation between them lacks the artificial coherence of scripted speech. This device becomes crucial in Episode 3, but in Episode 1 no particular person is privileged in this setting. Philip, arrested at an anti-war meeting, is forcibly drafted into the army, and after enduring brutal treatment in basic training is sent to the front with a lorry-load of other conscientious objectors, eventually to be tied to a post in no-man's land. He survives this experience to take part in later episodes.

Ben on the other hand joins the army, and revels in the uniform, visiting Sarah at the anti-war offices where she works and expressing his lack of understanding of the treatment that Philip is receiving. Instead of being drafted to France, Ben is instead sent with his unit to Ireland, to take part in the suppression of the countryside. We see him marching about the lanes with his unit, headed by an officer; they commandeer a house for the night, and then, the day after, one of the soldiers is led on to a mine by a small boy. Ben is detailed to catch the boy; he shoots at him in the woods, catches him, and the closing shot is of the soldiers marching along the lanes out of sight, the boy being dragged along with them. The soldier who had been killed was, we learn from a comment of Ben, a republican; he is in any case presented as one of the 'nicer' soldiers.

The plotting of this first episode does allow of a discrepancy between politics and persons. Philip takes up what can be seen to be an idealistic (Christian socialist) position, but is shown to

6. The term 'family romance' is used here to indicate the manner in which historical reconstruction deploys the family structure in order to set to work a required history. The story of a family becomes the vehicle on which we travel to the historical events of the time, setting in play the tensions and conflicts which are to be the principal materials of the reconstruction.

16 genuinely hold this position and be prepared to defend it under all circumstances. When he encounters a 'revolutionary' at the front, who talks to him of the need for violent struggle, the words of this revolutionary are not deployed as a denunciation of Philip, rather as the statement of conflicting socialist conceptions. Ben on the other hand is also given space to enjoy his induction into the army, and it is only through his experience in Ireland that he begins to question the role that he has adopted.

Clearly this plotting draws on 'history' for the mobilisation of a narrative. But this use of history goes further than the simple story that is presented, for it is the realism of the image that underwrites this narrative. It is notable that the letters that were printed in the *Radio Times* concerning the first episode concentrated on the veracity of the image: the clothes, the army buttons, whether the Army marched in threes or fours in 1916. The tonal quality of the pictures at the front, and certain of the sets, draw heavily on photographs that were taken at the time and which over the years have become recognised as images of the First World War. The slight fuzziness of the image in certain scenes, reminiscent of a Hovis or Ovaltine advertisement, further reinforces a visual quality of the past. British television is justly famed for its ability to create such plausible images of the past, down to the smallest detail, in marked contrast to American historical dramas where such realistic conventions are almost totally ignored.

The question that must be asked is however what function such careful reconstruction plays in the reconstruction of a past. It can be suggested that this veracity of the image is the vehicle for the veracity of the history that it constructs. This history is itself conceived as the truth of a past, a set of political events that we can draw lessons from. The project of *Days of Hope* is thus associated with the writing of a popular history along historicist lines. This history is however recognised as Truth by the viewer not by virtue of the 'facts' being correct, but because the image looks right. The recognition effect 'that's the way it was' is a product not of the historicity of the plot but of the manipulation of the image. As Colin MacCabe points out:

'The films articulate a classic relation between narrative and vision in which what we see is true and this truth confirms what we see. This apparently tautologous statement is one that finds its reality in its distribution through the time of the narrative and across the space of shot and character. The reality of the character is guaranteed by the shot, and the reality of the shot is guaranteed by the character.'⁷

The viewer of the programme is meant to learn from the experience

7. Colin MacCabe, 'Memory, Phantasy, Identity: *Days of Hope* and the Politics of the Past', *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, p 14.

that is presented in the same way that the character Ben learns 17
from his experiences in Episodes 1 and 2 and, drawing conclusions
from this experience, joins the Communist Party. The validity of
the experience from which the character Ben draws his lessons
is guaranteed by the fact that he as a subject is engaged directly
with it. The validity of the lessons that the viewer is supposed to
draw is guaranteed by the existence of a history which when
properly represented can function as a pedagogic Truth. But this
slide from character to viewer is only possible by the form of
representation that is employed, and, as becomes increasingly
clear in later episodes, there are certain real problems with the
constitution and functioning of the history that is meant to
instruct the viewer.

Episode 3 finds the Communist Ben living in the same house
as the Labour MP Philip. The year is 1924, and Philip is again the
idealist, this time the hard-working and possibly naive believer
in the viability of change through reform. Ben is the increasingly
articulate voice of revolutionary change, and with his comrades
confronts Philip with the difficulties of reformism. A notable
sequence has Philip, again hesitating, uncertain (unscripted),
defending the ability of the Labour Party to govern in the interests
of working people. But this time, by cutting the scene on the
unconvincing words of Philip, the position of the Labour Party and
its politics is represented as unconvincing. The hesitations of a
realist convention are deployed here to make Philip look a flabby
but well-meaning politician. Authority is given to the declamations
of Ben and his friends, and increasingly Truth comes to reside in
the worker's accent, especially that of the Durham miners who
arrive during the episode. The visit of these pit-men to a Soviet
trade delegation in the Palace of Westminster is symbolic of the
authenticity of these real workers: ignorant of the etiquette,
unable to find their way around the corridors of power, they are
portrayed as workers for whom this institution is irrelevant. The
sympathetic portrayal of these miners, the status given to them
in the image, represents the interests of the workers as divergent
to the concerns of a Labour Government which is trapped in the
illusions of the possibility of a Parliamentary road to social justice.

In many ways, the portrayal of militant workers in this episode
is a gross insult to the movement which it purports to represent.
For these real workers of 1924 are recognisable as such because
they are cast in the image of contemporary workers, who in many
ways are less articulate than their predecessors. The political con-
figuration that is sketched out in Episode 3 is one that relates
only to the present; in no way can it be seen as a 'faithful' repre-
sentation of past organisations and militants.⁸ The veracity of the

8. *Days of Hope* uses a reconstructed history to establish certain leftist
political positions, and at various points this construction can be called

18 image thus conceals the 'ahistorical' nature of the politics that is represented.

This is not of course an argument for a real history: what is being suggested is that *Days of Hope* uses the image of a history to deploy contemporary political arguments. The objection is that it endows its Trotskyist conception of revolution and reform with a truth which is underwritten by a constructed history. The truth of the argument is thus conditional, not on the actual viability of the politics that set this history to work, but rather on the apparent truth of this history as an autonomous object. The work of a memory is thus duped into a particular political position, not through a historical discourse with its own principles of truth, but rather through the organisation of an image of the past which, through its 'verity', bestows its own truth.

Such a film therefore plays tricks with the notion of a 'Popular Memory'; but we can take another example and explore the use of a historical mode by a leftist film-maker, René Allio's 'film of the book of the crime', *I, Pierre Rivière*. . . . The original book, edited by Foucault, comprised the statement of Pierre Rivière concerning the murder of his mother and two sisters in rural France in the 1830s.⁹ This remarkable 'confession' is combined with the official reports arising from the investigation of the crime and from the judicial process leading to Rivière's execution; following these documents a series of seminar papers discuss the significance of this collection. There have been two attempts to convert the original documents into film, and the version that Allio presents is the one singled out for approval by Foucault – although the reasons for such approbation are, as we shall see, rather questionable.

There is an ambiguity in treating Allio's film under the rubric of 'Popular Memory', since the dossier on which it depends is itself largely the recollections of Rivière himself, the perpetrator of the crime in question. The testimony of Rivière is itself quite extraordinary, written out at great length and detailing the affairs of his family and their possessions. Such is the detail that it can be read as a delineation of peasant property and relations of property.

into question by a simple reference to historical accounts. The point at issue here is that by contrasting Loach and Garnett's 'history' with texts which subject themselves to historical canons of evidence and argument, it is possible to establish that *Days of Hope* is, in this strict sense, 'unhistorical'. By casting, for their own ends, the worker of the 1920s in the image of the worker of the 1970s, Loach and Garnett gratuitously insult the self-educated militant of the 1920s, whose articulateness was a matter of pride.

9. *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère* . . . , presented by Michael Foucault, Paris, Gallimard/Julliard, 1973: English translation as *I, Pierre Rivière*, New York, Pantheon, 1977; forthcoming in paperback from Penguin Books.

and the crime of matricide which is involved can be seen as simply an expression of these relations. The point at issue here is however the manner in which the collection edited by Foucault is realised as a film, and the consequences of the mode of representation that it adopts. 19

Again, the vehicle for the realisation of the word of Rivière is 'family romance', in which the enactment of the crime and its causes is played out as the history of family relations. The process by which a village murder becomes a crime is represented by the visitation of officials, dressed formally in black, and descending on the village as in some awesome visitation. The Law is an official body which descends to make judgement on the lives of the peasantry, appropriating them in its discourse through interrogation, and establishing thereby the form of classification of events and persons. The scene of the crime is similarly introduced through the enactment of the words of the autopsy, emphasising again the regulation and organisation of an event into an official discourse. Here, and throughout the film, the words that are spoken are marked by a subtitle which notifies their source: here the words of the autopsy report, later in the interrogation of the villagers, the statement of the name and employment of the person who speaks to camera. Official discourse, the realisation of the reports that begin the book, is thus marked in the film by devices which assure the veracity of what is said in the film as an articulation of a printed source.

A problem however arises when the history of Rivière's family is given, for this is realised as a conventional narrative, the occasional voice-over from Pierre serving simply to link a series of scenes from a marriage. These scenes are essentially reconstructions based on the testimony of Rivière, but since they depart from a simple realisation of the written word the principle by which they are validated is different. The veracity of the sections marked as official discourse (although these are of course also re-enactments) is underwritten by the possibility of the viewer referring to the book, in which the words that are spoken will be found recorded. The veracity of the scenes of Pierre's family life on the other hand is dependent on principles of verisimilitude, the manner in which the image of the peasantry is reconstructed. The trials and tribulations of Pierre's father are traced through a narrative in which the truth of the statement rests in its appearance. The rural France of the 1830s is reconstituted, or rather, an image of it is. In one case, the labours of Pierre's father at the plough directly recall the paintings of Millet, in other cases, tableaux of village life rely on a visual memory. This portrait of French rural life takes over and dominates the film, displacing the activity of Pierre's memory, his recall of the intricacies of kin relations and property. Only fleeting reference is made to his ability to recall, and of course to write, and the image of Pierre that is presented as a

20 bucolic village idiot is in marked contrast to the image that is constructed in the printed text. The problem that arises here of course is that 'memory' is itself not directly realisable on film, and Allio's story is faced with the problem of presenting visually a series of ambiguities and contradictions. Thus for example there is the perpetual problem in the film of the location of the action: are we in 'his' or 'her' village? Are the people in this scene the relatives mentioned earlier? And of course the problem of the property relations that can be deciphered in the book becomes impenetrable when presented visually.

The comments that are made here are naturally simply a series of comments on history and representability. What is however more decisive is the manner in which Foucault comments on the film of the book that he was instrumental in assembling. As he states, the film has to be the film of the memoirs, and not of the crime; but the manner in which this is conceived is to say the least problematic. What has not been mentioned up until this point is that the peasant characters in the film are portrayed not by professional actors, but by peasants, in some cases descendants of the characters that they play. While in *Days of Hope* naturalistic conventions were employed by actors and director in the improvisation of action, here we have improvisors acting. The roughness of some of the scenes is due to this use of non-professionals. However, this is seen by Foucault as an extremely important point:

'Because Allio chose to commemorate this act on virtually the same location and with almost the same characters as 150 years ago, the same peasants in the same place make the same gestures again. It was difficult and truly extraordinary to be able to reduce the whole cinematic apparatus, the whole filmic apparatus to such slenderness, quite unique I think in the history of the cinema.'¹⁰

The coincidence of persons and location therefore, argues Foucault, adds considerably to the historical validity of the film. But it can be objected that after all these real peasants are in fact dressed up as actors. The choice that Allio made was one between actors dressed up as peasants and peasants dressed up as actors. It cannot be said that the latter option has inherently anything to recommend it; for to think that real peasants make better acted peasants necessarily falls prey to the naturalistic conventions of the narrative. To believe that a political point follows necessarily from this fact is to subscribe to a notion of history which conceives it as a set of events and significations to be recovered. Peasants, therefore, are the best agents for the recovery of a peasant history, a discourse which is 'theirs'. By the enactment of their own history a voice is given to the silent peasantry represented by the official

10. 'Michel Foucault: Interview - I, Pierre Rivière', *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, p 32.

discourse. Such a conception of history and utterance can be found in some of the more extreme usages of 'oral history', in which the truth of a person's utterance is related to the experience of that person as historical agent. This is associated again with the extraordinary television programme made by Godard in which a peasant speaks for an hour; justified politically on the grounds that the peasant voice is one that is suppressed in the authoritative voice of the media.¹¹ Apart from the gross naivety of such a judgement, we can see a confusion operating in which the constitution of history is subject to the action of historical persons.¹² 21

For ultimately the problems of Popular Memory in the cinema run into a conjunction of humanism and historicism in the attempt to render memory representable filmically. These terms are not being deployed here as the means of dismissing important areas of work, for as was suggested at the beginning of this article extremely useful functions can be served by the historicist use of historical discourse. Likewise the work of a humanism is at times extremely progressive. The difficulty with the conceptions isolated by both of these terms is however that they present themselves as politically eternal truths, whereas in fact their political 'truth' is conditional. This can be illustrated by briefly returning to the issue raised by Foucault concerning the film *The Sorrow and the Pity*.

Cahiers and Foucault argued that Ophuls, by casting doubt on the prevalence of wartime resistance to German occupation, had demobilised a history of struggle against oppression, in which contemporary struggles were validated by the fact that they had a heritage. What Ophuls did was effectively to deprive a certain section of a 'Popular Memory' of its heroic past. In particular, it undermined the conception that history was something that was

11. *Louison*: one of the television programmes produced by Godard and Anne-Marie Mieville in their series 'Six fois deux', otherwise known as 'Sur et sous la communication'.

12. This judgement may seem harsh, particularly in relation to *Louison*, since it could be argued that Godard's intention, in these programmes and elsewhere, is not to assert the truth of a discourse such as that of the peasant *Louison*, but to question the mode of television representation within which that discourse is suppressed. But while that might be his 'intention', what happens is that the institution refuses to be questioned and endows the words of *Louison* with the 'truth' of the person speaking to camera. The basic mistake on which many of Godard's 'political' films (and his more recent television work) turns is a confusion of human persons with political agents. It is assumed that the disruption of the reverie of the subject is a political act: to disturb the conventions in which the person in the cinema bathes is to pose to that person *political* questions. Subjects are thereby equated with persons; upsetting persons is conceived as the disruption of subjectivity. This confusion results from the perverted but basic humanism of Godard's work, a humanism which demobilises the political effectivity of allegedly 'radical' film texts.

22 forged by heroic personages, and emphasised the ordinariness of collaboration and resistance. For the cinema, the significance of a past is inscribed in the heroes that it constructs; the problem of signification of 'history' is solved by the insertion of historical agents who are thereby the bearers of signification. This is precisely why both *Days of Hope* and *I, Pierre Rivière* make use of a genre of family romance. At the least, Ophüls's film undermined this association of significant events of the past with heroism, and in doing so made a step forward in the way that 'the past' is represented. In particular, the idea that during a period of struggle the lines were drawn clearly, that shades of grey were bleached out by the fact of struggle, was decisively rejected. Life under the occupation was seen as complex, messy and mundane as it is now. The past could not function as a referent in a teleological history of the present.

The combination of a historicism with film results often in a humanism which constructs historical narrative as the actions of historical persons. This confuses the problem of the representability of the conjuncture with the veracity of a constructed history. History in the cinema thus too easily presupposes that the historicity of events rests on the faithful representation of the agents of this history. There are instances of films which evade this, either at the level of the individual or at the level of the class subject – Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* can in certain respects be seen as an example of the former, in which the actor playing the leading role is not directly endowed with a presence that converts him into a vehicle for a history. The position that Foucault and *Cahiers* adopt however rests on an implicit humanism that dominates their evaluation of a variety of films and leads them to conceive them as unitary in their effects on a history. This conception can also be seen at work in the manner in which Foucault assesses the film by Allio.

In *I, Pierre Rivière*, historical documents become a documented history that is visible. Foucault ignores the distance between the written documents and the film text, and treats the latter as a simple medium for the transmission of the former. The existence of 'real peasants' in the film reduces the distance between the real and the filmed, hence Foucault's remark noted above concerning the 'slenderness of the cinematic apparatus'. This implies that such devices bring us 'closer' to an origin, the truth of the peasantry of nineteenth century France. For in film, historicism and humanism become complementary problems: the attempt to realise a history regresses rapidly to a humanism as its support in which the person is the bearer of the history, the visible agent of historicity, in whose actions are inscribed the truth of the past.

Introductory Note

The section which follows, devoted to the concept of suture, comprises three items:

(1) Jacques-Alain Miller's paper, 'La Suture (éléments de la logique du signifiant)', delivered on February 24, 1965 to the seminar of Dr J Lacan and published in French in *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, n 1, 1966 (© Jacques-Alain Miller 1973); the text here is taken from a forthcoming collection of translations from French, edited by Colin MacCabe, to be published under the title *The Logic of the Signifier* (© Macmillan and Co).

(2) The article 'La Suture' by Jean-Pierre Oudart, extending the concept to cinema, which appeared in *Cahiers du Cinéma* nos 211 and 212, April and May 1969 (© Les Editions de l'Etoile; translation © SEFT) and has subsequently been the object of much of discussion, which has often, however, in English-speaking countries, taken place at second or third hand.

(3) A commentary by Stephen Heath on the concept as it appears in Lacan and Miller and as it is elaborated first by Oudart and then by Daniel Dayan ('The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1974).

The translation of J-A Miller's paper is by Jacqueline Rose, that of J-P Oudart's article by Kari Hanet. The pronoun 'il' when referring to the 'subject' ('le sujet') has been rendered as 'it', and when referring to the spectator (or when, as occasionally with Oudart, subject and spectator are elided) as 'he'. 'He/she' (or variants) has been given only where actual as opposed to purely notional persons are designated. Difficulty was presented by Oudart's use of the terms 'cinématographe' and 'cinématographie' in a sense partly determined by Bresson's distinction between 'le cinématographe' and 'le cinéma' (see R Bresson, *Notes sur la cinématographie*, Paris, Gallimard 1975: English translation as *Notes on Cinematography*, New York, Urizen Books (London, Pluto Press) 1977). Oudart's usage also contains a notion of cinematography as writing (see footnote by Stephen Heath on p 62 below), which is specifically foregrounded on one occasion. Neither Bresson's distinction, nor the additional overtone implied by Oudart, is easy to sustain in English, particularly since 'cinématographique' is also the normal French for cinematic. We have therefore stuck to the regular English adjectival usage, while rendering the substantival form as 'the cinematic' or as 'cinematography' according to the context.

We should like to express our thanks to Henry Seggerman, whose typescript translation and extensive notes on the Oudart article were of great help to us in compiling this dossier.

Jacques-Alain Miller

No-one without those precise conceptions of analysis which only a personal analysis can provide has any right to concern himself (or herself) with it. Ladies and Gentlemen, doubtless you fully conform to the strength of that ruling by Freud in the *New Introductory Lectures*.

Thus, articulated as a dilemma, a question raises itself for me in your regard.

If, contravening this injunction, it is of psychoanalysis that I am going to speak, – then, by listening to someone whom you know to be incapable of producing the credentials which alone would authorise your assent, *what are you doing here?*

Or, if my subject is not psychoanalysis, – then you who so faithfully attend here in order to become conversant with the problems which relate to the freudian field, *what are you doing here?*

And you above all, Ladies and Gentlemen the analysts, what are you doing here, you to whom Freud specifically addressed the warning not to rely on those who are not confirmed in the practice of your science, on those so-called authorities, those literary intellectuals, who bring their soup to warm at your fire without so much as recognising your hospitality? Even if he who reigns in your kitchens as head-chef could amuse himself by letting someone lower than the lowest kitchen boy get hold of the pot with which you are so naturally concerned since it is from it that you draw your sustenance, it was still uncertain – and I confess that I myself doubted – that you would be ready to drink in a soup merely cooked up in that way. And yet you are here. Permit me to marvel a moment at your presence, and at the privilege of your having lent me for a while that most precious of the organs at your disposal, your ear.

Which I must now attempt to justify to it, and with reasons which are at least admissible.

I will not keep you waiting. The justification lies in this, which will come as no surprise after the developments which have so enchanted your hearing at this seminar since the start of the academic year, that *the freudian field is not representable as a closed surface*. The opening up of psychoanalysis is not the effect of the liberalism, the whim, the blindness even of he who has set himself as its guardian. For, if not being situated on the inside does not relegate you to the outside, it is because at a certain point, excluded from a two-dimensional topology, the two surfaces

join up and the periphery or outer edge crosses over the circumscription. 25

That I can recognise and occupy that point is what releases you from the dilemma I presented to you, and entitles you to be listening to me to-day. Which will enable you to grasp, Ladies and Gentlemen, to what extent you are implicated in my undertaking and how far its successful outcome concerns you.

CONCEPT OF THE LOGIC OF THE SIGNIFIER

What I am aiming to restore, piecing together indications dispersed through the work of Jacques Lacan, is to be designated the logic of the signifier – it is a general logic in that its functioning is formal in relation to all fields of knowledge including that of psychoanalysis which, in acquiring a specificity there, it governs; it is a minimal logic in that within it are given those pieces only which are necessary to assure it a progression reduced to a linear movement, uniformly generated at each point of its necessary sequence. That this logic should be called the logic of the signifier avoids the partiality of the conception which would limit its validity to the field in which it was first produced as a category; to correct its linguistic declension is to prepare the way for its importation into other discourses, an importation which we will not fail to carry out once we have grasped its essentials here.

The chief advantage to be gained from this process of minimisation is the greatest economy of conceptual expenditure, which is then in danger of obscuring to you that the conjunctions which it effects between certain functions are so essential that to neglect them is to compromise analytic reasoning proper.

By considering the relationship between this logic and that which I will call logician's logic, we see that its particularity lies in the fact that the first treats of the emergence of the second, and should be conceived of as the logic of the origin of logic – which is to say, that it does not follow its laws, but that, prescribing their jurisdiction, itself falls outside that jurisdiction.

This dimension of the archeological can be grasped most succinctly through a movement back from the field of logic itself, where its miscognition, at its most radical because closest to is recognition, is effected.

That this step repeats something of that which Derrida has shown to be exemplary to phenomenology¹ will conceal to none but the most hasty this crucial difference, that here miscognition finds its point of departure in the production of meaning. We can say that it is constituted not as a forgetting, but as a repression.

To designate it I choose the name of *suture*. Suture names the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse; we shall see

1. cf Husserl, *L'origine de la géométrie*, translation and introduction by Jacques Derrida, PUF, 1962.

26 that it figures there as the element which is lacking, in the form of a stand-in.* For, while there lacking, it is not purely and simply absent. Suture, by extension – the general relation of lack to the structure of which it is an element, inasmuch as it implies the position of a taking-the-place-of.

It is the objective of this paper to articulate the concept of suture which, if it is not named explicitly as such by Jacques Lacan, is constantly present in his system.

Let it be absolutely clear that it is not as philosopher or philosopher's apprentice that I am speaking here – if the philosopher is as characterised by Heinrich Heine in a sentence quoted by Freud, 'with his nightcaps and the tatters of his dressing-gown, patching up the gaps in the structure of the universe'. But take care not to think that the function of suturation is peculiar to the philosopher: what is specific to the philosopher is the determination of the field in which he operates as a 'universal structure'. It is important that you realise that the logician, like the linguist, also sutures at his particular level. And, quite as much, anyone who says 'I'.

In order to grasp suture we must cut across what a discourse makes explicit of itself, and distinguish from its meaning, its letter. This paper is concerned with a letter – a dead letter. It should come as no surprise if the meaning then dies.

The main thread of this analysis will be Gottlob Frege's argument in *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*,² crucial here because it puts into question those terms which in Peano's axiomatic, adequate for a construction of a theory of natural numbers, are taken as primary – that is, the zero, the number, the successor.³† This calling into question of the theory, by disintegrating, from the axiomatic where the theory is consolidated, the suturing, delivers up this last.

THE ZERO AND THE ONE

Here then is the question posed in its most general form:

what is it that functions in the series of whole natural numbers to which we can assign their progression?

And the answer, which I shall give at once before establishing it:

* The French gives 'tenant-lieu', literally a 'holding-the-place-of' in the sense of substitute; it has been variously translated as 'stand-in', 'taking-the-place-of', etc. [Translator]

2. German text with English translation published under the title *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Basil Blackwell, 1953.

3. Our reading will not concern itself with any of Frege's various inflections of his basic purpose, and will therefore keep outside the thematisation of the difference of meaning and reference, as well as of the later definition of the concept in terms of predication, from which is deduced its non-saturation.

† The English has 'following in a series' as substantive ('der Folgen in einer Reihe'), cf Frege, Blackwell, para 79: 'Definition of following in a series'. [Translator]

in the process of the constitution of the series, in the genesis of progression, *the function of the subject*, miscognised, is operative.

27

This proposition will certainly appear as a paradox to anyone who knows that the logical discourse of Frege opens with the exclusion of that which is held by empiricist theory to be essential for the passage of the thing to the unit and of the set of units to the unit of number: that is, the function of the subject, as support of the operations of abstraction and unification.

For the unity which is thus assured both for the individual and the set, it only holds in so far as the number functions as its *name*. Whence originates the ideology which makes of the subject the producer of fictions, short of recognising it as the product of its product – an ideology in which logical and psychological discourse are wedded, with political discourse occupying the key position, which can be seen admitted in Occam, concealed in Locke, and miscognised thereafter.

A subject therefore, defined by attributes whose other side is political, disposing as of powers, of a faculty of memory necessary to close the set without the loss of any of the interchangeable elements, and a faculty of repetition which operates inductively. There is no doubt that it is this subject which Frege, setting himself from the start against the empiricist foundation of arithmetic, excludes from the field in which the concept of the number is to appear.

But if it is held that the subject is not reducible, in its most essential function, to the psychological, then its *exclusion* from the field of number is assimilable to *repetition*. Which is what I have to demonstrate.

You will be aware that Frege's discourse starts from the fundamental system comprising the three concepts of the concept, the object and the number, and two relations, that of the concept to the object, which is called subsumption, and that of the concept to the number which I will call assignation. A number is assigned to a concept which subsumes objects.

What is specifically logical about this system is that each concept is only defined and exists solely through the relation which it maintains as subsumer with that which it subsumes. Similarly, an object only has existence in so far as it falls under a concept, there being no other determination involved in its logical existence, so that the object takes its meaning from its difference to the thing integrated, by its spatio-temporal localisation, to the real.

Whence you can see the disappearance of the thing which must be effected in order for it to appear as object – which is *the thing in so far as it is one*.

It is clear that the concept which operates in the system, formed solely through the determination of subsumption, is a redoubled concept: *the concept of identity to a concept*.

28 This redoubling, induced in the concept by identity, engenders the logical dimension, because in effecting the disappearance of the thing it gives rise to the emergence of the numerable.

For example, if I group what falls under the concept 'child of Agamemnon and Cassandra', I summon in order to subsume them Pelops and Teledamus. To this set I can only assign a number if I put into play the concept 'identical to the concept: child of Agamemnon and Cassandra'. Through the effect of the fiction of this concept, the children now intervene in so far as each one is, so to speak, applied to itself – which transforms it into a unit, and gives to it the status of an object which is numerable as such. It is this one of the singular unit, this one of identity of the subsumed, which is common to all numbers in so far as they are first constituted as units.

From this can be deduced the definition of the assignation of number: according to Frege 'the number assigned to the concept F is the extension of the concept "identical to the concept F"'. Frege's ternary system has as its effect that all that is left to the thing is the support of its identity with itself, by which it is the object of the operative concept, and hence numerable.

The process that I have just set out authorises me to conclude the following proposition, whose relevance will emerge later, – the unit which could be called *unifying* of the concept in so far as it is assigned by the number is subordinate to the unit as *distinctive* in so far as it supports the number.

As for the position of the distinctive unit, its foundation is to be situated in the function of identity which, conferring on each thing of the world the property of being one, effects its transformation into an object of the (logical) concept.

At this point in the construction, you will sense all the importance of the definition of identity which I am going to present.

This definition which must give its true meaning to the concept of number, must borrow nothing from it⁴ – precisely in order to engender numeration.

This definition, which is pivotal to his system, Frege takes from Leibniz. It is contained in this statement: *eadem sunt quorum unum potest substitui alteri salva veritate*. Those things are identical of which one can be substituted for the other *salva veritate*, without loss of truth. Doubtless you can estimate the crucial importance of what is effected by this statement: the emergence of the function of truth. Yet what it assumes is more important than what it expresses. That is, identity-with-itself. That a thing cannot be substituted for itself, then where does this leave truth? Absolute is its subversion.

If we follow Leibniz's argument, the failing of truth whose possibility is opened up for an instant, its loss through the sub-

4. Which is why we must say identity and not equality.

stitution for one thing of another, would be followed by its 29
immediate reconstitution in a new relation: truth is recovered
because the substituted thing, in that it is identical with itself,
can be the object of a judgement and enter into the order of dis-
course: identical with itself, it can be articulated.

But that a thing should not be identical with itself subverts
the field of truth, ruins it and abolishes it.

You will grasp to what extent the preservation of truth is
implicated in this identity with itself which connotes the passage
from the thing to the object. Identity-with-itself is essential if
truth is to be saved.

Truth is. Each thing is identical with itself

Let us now put into operation Frege's schema, that is, go through
the three-stage itinerary which he prescribes to us. Let there be
a thing X of the world. Let there be the empirical concept of this
X. The concept which finds a place in the schema is not this
empirical concept but that which redoubles it, being 'identical
with the concept of X'. The object which falls under this concept
is X itself, as a unit. In this, the number, which is the third term
of the sequence, to be assigned to the concept of X will be the
number 1. Which means that this function of the number 1 is
repetitive for all things of the world. It is in this sense that this 1
is only the unit which constitutes the number as such, and not
the 1 in its personal identity as number with its own particular
place and a proper name in the series of numbers.

Furthermore, its construction demands that, in order to transform
it, we call upon a thing of the world – which, according to Frege,
cannot be: the logical must be sustained through nothing but
itself.

In order for the number to pass from the repetition of the 1 of
the identical to that of its ordered succession, in order for the
logical dimension to gain its autonomy definitively, without any
reference to the real, the zero has to appear.

Which appearance is obtained because truth is. Zero is the
number assigned to the concept 'not identical with itself'. In
effect, let there be the concept 'not identical with itself'. This
concept, by virtue of being a concept, has an extension, subsumes
an object. Which object? None. Since truth is, no object falls into
the place of the subsumed of this concept, and the number which
qualifies its extension is zero.

In this engendering of the zero, I have stressed that it is sup-
ported by the proposition that truth is. If no object falls under the
concept of non-identical-with-itself, it is because truth must be
saved. If there are no things which are not identical with them-
selves, it is because non-identity with itself is contradictory to the
very dimension of truth. To its concept, we assign the zero. It is
this decisive proposition that *the concept of not-identical-with-
itself is assigned by the number zero* which sutures logical discourse.

30 For, and here I am working across Frege's text, in the autonomous construction of the logical through itself, it has been necessary, in order to exclude any reference to the real, to evoke on the level of the concept an object *not-identical-with-itself* – to be subsequently rejected from the dimension of truth.

The zero which is inscribed in the place of the number consummates the exclusion of this object. As for this place, marked out by subsumption, in which the object is lacking, there *nothing* can be *written*, and if a 0 must be traced, it is merely in order to figure a *blank*, to render visible the lack.

From the zero lack to the zero number, the non-conceptualisable is conceptualised.

Let us now set aside the zero lack in order to consider only that which is produced by the alternation of its evocation and its revocation, the zero number.

The zero understood as a number, which assigns to the subsuming concept the lack of an object, is as such a thing – *the first non-real thing in thought*.

If of the number zero we construct the concept, it subsumes as its sole object the number zero. The number which assigns it is therefore 1.

Frege's system works by the circulation of an element, at each of the places it fixes: from the number zero to its concept, from this concept to its object and to its number – a circulation which produces the 1.⁵

This system is thus so constituted *with the 0 counting as 1*. The counting of the 0 as 1 (whereas the concept of the zero subsumes nothing in the real but a blank) is the general support of the series of numbers.

It is this which is demonstrated by Frege's analysis of the operation of the successor, which consists of obtaining the number which follows n by adding to it a unit: n' , the successor of n , is equal to $n + 1$, that is, $\dots n \dots (n + 1) = n' \dots$ Frege opens out the $n + 1$ in order to discover what is involved in the passage from n to its successor.

You will grasp the paradox of this engendering as soon as I produce the most general formula for the successor which Frege arrives at: 'the Number assigned to the concept "member of the series of natural numbers ending with n " follows in the series of natural numbers directly after n '.

Let us take a number. The number three. It will serve to constitute the concept 'member of the series of natural numbers ending with three'. We find that the number assigned to this concept is four. Here then is the 1 of $n + 1$. Where does it come from? Assigned to its redoubled concept, the number 3 functions as the

5. I leave aside the commentary of paragraph 76 which gives the abstract definition of contiguity.

unifying name of a set: as reserve. In the concept of 'member of the series of natural numbers ending with 3', it is the term (in the sense both of element and of final element). 31

In the order of the real, the 3 subsumes 3 objects. In the order of number, which is that of discourse bound by truth, it is numbers which are counted: before the 3, there are 3 numbers – it is therefore the fourth.

In the order of number, *there is an addition the 0*, and the 0 counts for 1. The displacement of a number, from the function of reserve to that of term, implies the summation of the 0. Whence the successor. That which in the real is pure and simple absence finds itself through the fact of number (through the instance of truth) noted 0 and counted for 1.

Which is why we say the object not-identical with itself invoked-rejected by truth, instituted-annulled by discourse (subsumption as such) – in a word, sutured.

The emergence of the lack as 0, and of 0 as 1 determines the appearance of the successor. Let there be n ; the lack is fixed as 0 which is fixed as 1: $n + 1$; which is added in order to give n' – which absorbs the 1.

Certainly, if the 1 of $n + 1$ is nothing other than the counting of the zero, the function of addition of the sign $+$ is superfluous, and we must restore to the horizontal representation of the engendering its verticality: the 1 is to be taken as the primary symbol of the emergence of lack in the field of truth, and the sign $+$ indicates the crossing, the transgression through which the 0 lack comes to be represented as 1, producing, through this difference of n to n' which you have seen to be an effect of meaning, the name of a number.

Logical representation collapses this three-level construction. The operation I have effected opens it out. If you consider the opposition of these two axes, you will understand what is at stake in logical suturing, and the difference of the logic which I am putting forward to logician's logic.

That zero is a number: such is the proposition which assures the logical dimension of its closure.

Our purpose has been to recognise in the zero number the suturing stand-in for the lack.

Remember here the hesitation perpetuated in the work of Bertrand Russell concerning its localisation (interior? or exterior to the series of numbers?).

The generating repetition of the series of numbers is sustained by this, that the zero lack passes, first along a vertical axis, across the bar which limits the field of truth in order to be represented there as one, subsequently cancelling out as meaning in each of the names of the numbers which are caught up in the metonymic chain of successional progression.

Just as the zero as lack of the contradictory object must be dis-

32 tingished from that which sutures this absence in the series of numbers, so the 1, as the proper name of a number, is to be distinguished from that which comes to fix in a trait the zero of the not-identical with itself sutured by the identity with itself, which is the law of discourse in the field of truth. The central paradox to be grasped (which as you will see in a moment is the paradox of the signifier in the sense of Lacan) is that the trait of the identical represents the non-identical, whence is deduced the impossibility of its redoubling,⁶ and from that impossibility the structure of *repetition*, as the process of differentiation of the identical.

Now, if the series of numbers, metonymy of the zero, begins with its metaphor, if the 0 member of the series as number is only the standing-in-place suturing the absence (of the absolute zero) which moves beneath the chain according to the alternation of a representation and an exclusion – then what is there to stop us from seeing in the restored relation of the zero to the series of numbers the most elementary articulation of the subject's relation to the signifying chain?

The impossible object, which the discourse of logic summons as the not-identical with itself and then rejects as the pure negative, which it summons and rejects in order to constitute itself as that which it is, which it summons and rejects *wanting to know nothing of it*, we name this object, in so far as it functions as the excess which operates in the series of numbers, the subject.

Its exclusion from the discourse which internally it intimates is suture.

If we now determine the trait as the signifier, and ascribe to the number the position of signified, the relation of lack to the trait should be considered as the logic of the signifier.

RELATION OF SUBJECT AND SIGNIFIER

In effect, what in Lacanian algebra is called the relation of the subject to the field of the Other (as the locus of truth) can be identified with the relation which the zero entertains with the identity of the unique as the support of truth. This relation, in so far as it is matrical, cannot be integrated into any definition of objectivity – this being the doctrine of Dr Lacan. The engendering of the zero, from this not-identical with itself under which no thing of the world falls, illustrates this to you.

What constitutes this relation as the matrix of the chain must be isolated in the implication which makes the determinant of the exclusion of the subject outside the field of the Other its representation in that field in the form of the one of the unique, the one of distinctive unity, which is called 'unary' by Lacan. In his

6. And, at another level, the impossibility of meta-language (cf text by Jacques Lacan, *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, No 1, 1966).

algebra, this exclusion is marked by the bar which strikes the S 33
of the subject in front of the capital A, and which is displaced by
the identity of the subject onto the A, according to the funda-
mental exchange of the logic of the signifier, a displacement whose
effect is the emergence of signification signified to the subject.
Untouched by the exchange of the bar, this exteriority of the
subject to the Other is maintained, which institutes the un-
conscious.

For: – if it is clear that the tripartition which divides (1) the
signified-to-the-subject, (2) the signifying chain whose radical
alterity in relation to the subject cuts off the subject from its field,
and finally (3) the external field of this reject, cannot be covered
by the linguistic dichotomy of signified and signifier; – if the
consciousness of the subject is to be situated on the level of the
effects of signification, governed, so much so that they could even
be called its reflections, by the repetition of the signifier; – if
repetition itself is produced by the vanishing of the subject and
its passage as lack – then only the unconscious can name the pro-
gression which constitutes the chain in the order of thought.

On the level of this constitution, the definition of the subject
comes down to *the possibility of one signifier more*.

Is it not ultimately to this function of excess that can be
referred the power of thematisation, which Dedekind assigns to
the subject in order to give to set theory its theorem of existence?
The possibility of existence of an enumerable infinity can be
explained by this, that 'from the moment that one proposition is
true, I can always produce a second, that is, that the first is true
and so on to infinity'.⁷

In order to ensure that this recourse to the subject as the
founder of iteration is not a recourse to psychology, we simply
substitute for thematisation the representation of the subject (as
signifier) which excludes consciousness because it is not effected
for someone, but, in the chain, in the field of truth, *for* the signi-
fier which precedes it. When Lacan faces the definition of the sign
as that which represents something for someone, with that of the
signifier as that which represents the subject for another signifier,
he is stressing that in so far as the signifying chain is concerned,
it is on the level of its effects and not of its cause that conscious-
ness is to be situated. The insertion of the subject into the chain
is representation, necessarily correlative to an exclusion which is
a vanishing.

If now we were to try and develop in time the relation which
engenders and supports the signifying chain, we would have to
take into account the fact that temporal succession is under the
dependency of the linearity of the chain. The time of engendering

7. Dedekind, quoted by Cavailles ('Philosophie mathématique', p 124,
Hermann, 1962).

34 can only be circular – which is why both these propositions are true at one and the same time, that subject is anterior to signifier and that signifier is anterior to subject – but only appears as such after the introduction of the signifier. The retroaction consists essentially of this: the birth of linear time. We must hold together the definitions which make the subject *the effect of the signifier* and the signifier *the representative of the subject*: it is a circular, though non-reciprocal, relation.

By crossing logical discourse at its point of least resistance, that of its suture, you can see articulated the structure of the subject as a ‘flickering in eclipses’, like the movement which opens and closes the number, and delivers up the lack in the form of the 1 in order to abolish it in the successor.

As for the +, you have understood the unprecedented function which it takes on in the logic of the signifier (a sign, no longer of addition, but of that summation of the subject in the field of the Other, which calls for its *annulment*). It remains to disarticulate it in order to separate the unary trait of emergence, and the bar of the reject: thereby making manifest the *division* of the subject which is the other name for its *alienation*.

It will be deduced from this that the signifying chain is *structure of the structure*.

If structural causality (causality in the structure in so far as the subject is implicated in it) is not an empty expression, it is from the minimal logic which I have developed here that it will find its status.

We leave for another time the construction of its concept.

Jean-Pierre Oudart

I

Bresson's fundamental discovery, foreshadowed in *Pickpocket* and asserted in *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, was of a cinematic articulation irreducible to any other, which we shall call suture.

Suture represents the closure of the cinematic *énoncé* in line with its relationship with its subject (the filmic subject or rather the cinematic subject), which is recognised, and then put in its place as the spectator – thus distinguishing the suture from all other types of cinema, particularly the so-called 'subjective' cinema, where the suture did exist, but undefined theoretically. At first film-makers had only experimented quite intuitively with the effects of the profound necessity of suture, but not with its causes which remained hidden given the subjective conception they had of the image and their confusion of the filmic subject with the filmed subject. Having determined the filmic subject, Bresson, no less radically than Godard, has put the filmed subject back in its place as signifying object. However – and this distinguishes his work from the whole of modern cinema – Bresson gives more than he took away; he puts the filmed subject within a structure and in a symbolic place which are those of cinema per se, no longer as a fictive subject located in an illusory existential relationship with its surroundings, but as the actor in a representation whose symbolic dimension is revealed in the process of reading and viewing.

Suture is best understood through a consideration of what is at stake in the process of 'reading' film. The properties of the image manifested there and revealed in particular by the 'subjective' cinema are currently being not so much challenged as repressed (with the result that they are then often 're-revealed' in the research of young film-makers such as Pollet). These characteristics mean that the cinema itself engenders the cinematic, that the image of its own accord enters the order of the signifier, and that by and in this process of reading are determined the properties, the conditions and the limits of its signifying power. Such a recognition should entail once more questioning the theoretical problems of the cinematic and of signification in the cinema. To understand this demands reading the image to its detriment, a reading with which the contemporary cinema has sometimes made us lose our familiarity, since its use of images without depth hides what the depth-of-field cinema revealed all the time: that every filmic field

36 traced by the camera and all objects revealed through depth of field – even in a static shot – are echoed by another field, the fourth side, and an absence emanating from it.

Quite simply then and prior almost to any semantic consideration, we are given access to the *logic* of the cinematic by means of this second reading which reveals the functioning of its images. Every filmic field is echoed by an absent field, the place of a character who is put there by the viewer's imaginary, and which we shall call the Absent One. At a certain moment of the reading all the objects of the filmic field combine together to form the signifier of its absence. At this key-moment the image enters the order of the signifier, and the undefined strip of film the realm of the discontinuous, the 'discrete'. It is essential to understand this, since up to now film-makers believed that, by resorting to cinematic units as discrete as possible, they would find their way back to the rules of linguistic discourse, whereas it is cinema itself, when designating itself as cinematography,* which tends to constitute its own *énoncé* in 'discrete' units.

In a second phase, the signifier of absence, like a frozen letter, is given as a signifying Sum, the whole of the image tending to form an autonomous unit of absolute signification: a fundamentally poor signification, like that of a discourse which is spelt out, more like a signifying diagram than actual speech. At this stage of the reading the signifier, abstracted from the filmic field, is not yet anchored to it. It has become a floating signifying Sum, certain of whose images (those whose symbolic character gives them a real semantic autonomy, as for instance in Lang) demonstrate the tendency to abstract themselves from the chain of the *énoncé*, or rather not to be integrated within it.

It is therefore easy to see the difficulties of a cinematic discourse which, like that of most film-makers, is a simple articulation of successive shots. For, if two consecutive images do not tend towards articulation together, but instead function initially as autonomous cells (although, being victims of linguistic habits, we believe the opposite to be true), then their articulation can only be produced by an extra-cinematic element (ie a linguistic *énoncé*) or by the presence of common signifying elements in each image. In both cases, the formation of the syntagm demands a redundancy of the signified (which must not be confused with the duplication of the signifier without which, as we shall see later, the reading of film would be impossible); this inevitably entails a substantial loss of 'information' and a real fissure between the elements forming the chain of the discourse and those unarticulated, excessive elements which end up forming a magma which paralyses the film by its inertia. In *La Chinoise* Godard poetically exasperates this fissure between what might be called the 'thing' of the image

* See introductory note above

and its fragile and precious signs, between its reified discourse and the background of opaqueness against which it stands out and to which colour gives a quasi-pictorial density. 37

The opposite of such a form of the cinematic is that which we encounter in *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, where the most important principle, made familiar by the 'subjective' cinema, is that the images are not first mutually articulated, but that the filmic field is articulated by the absent field, that is the imaginary field of the film. This then raises the problem of the suture, which (to avoid the ambiguity present in Bresson's subsequent work) will be defined as follows: prior to any semantic 'exchange' between two images (Bresson asserts that images must only have an 'exchange' value), and within the framework of a cinematic *énoncé* constructed on a shot/reverse-shot principle, the appearance of a lack perceived as a Some One (the Absent One) is followed by its abolition by someone (or something) placed within the same field – everything happening within the same shot or rather within the filmic space defined by the same take. This is the fundamental fact from which effects derive. As a result the field of Absence becomes the field of the Imaginary of the filmic space, formed by the two fields, the absent one and the present one; the signifier is echoed in that field and retroactively anchors itself in the filmic field; the 'exchange' Bresson talks of takes place between these two fields, at which point the *signified* truly appears. Therefore the suture (the abolition of the Absent One and its resurrection in someone) has a dual effect. On the one hand it is essentially retroactive on the level of the signified, since it presides over a semantic exchange between a present field and an imaginary field, representing the field now occupied by the former – within the more or less rigid framework of the shot/reverse-shot. On the other hand, it is anticipatory on the level of the signifier; for, just as the present filmic segment was constituted as a signifying unit by the Absent One, that something or someone, replacing it, anticipates on the necessarily 'discrete' nature of the unit whose appearance it announces.

In fact the fundamental cinematic figures of *The Trial of Joan of Arc* should not be called shot/reverse-shot because they no longer have anything in common with those of the 'subjective' cinema, which realised very quickly that it could only use them obliquely, lest they denounce its fiction. In fact one of the only true shot/reverse-shot series in the history of the cinema is the aberrant series in *Kriemhild's Revenge*, where the protagonists seem unreal because of Lang's categorical refusal to allow the camera to move from the position of their viewpoint. In *The Trial of Joan of Arc* the camera's obliqueness, at last openly admitted and established as a system (if only Bresson's curious idea of the unique point of view from which an object demands to be filmed, were simply about the need to search for the right angle, the right margin of obliqueness for the camera) reveals by and for whom

38 the operation of suture works: the filmic subject, the spectator, from a place which, although remaining empty when he vanishes into the filmic field, must nevertheless be kept for him throughout the film; otherwise the spectator may fail to fulfil the role of imaginary subject of the cinematic discourse, a role which is only possible from a locus displaced in relation to the field of the Imaginary and the place of the Absent One, since the spectator is not the Absent One.

The spectator is doubly decentred in the cinema. First what is enunciated, initially, is not the viewer's own discourse, nor anyone else's: it is thus that he comes to posit the signifying object as the signifier of the absence of anyone. Secondly the unreal space of the enunciation leads to the necessary quasi-disappearance of the subject as it enters its own field and thus submerges, in a sort of hypnotic continuum in which all possibility of discourse is abolished, the relation of alternating eclipse which the subject has to its own discourse; and this relation then demands to be represented within the process of reading the film, which it duplicates.

Nothing can be said about the relationship between the subject and the filmic field itself, since nothing is said *in its process*, although this syncopated *jouissance* – nullifying any reading and cut off from what is excluded from the field by perception of the frame – can only be referred to in erotic terms (or at least has constantly inspired the cinema's own erotic commentary on itself). Let us say that it is the phenomenal support which, given the materials at hand (ie, the cinema itself), helps the spectator organise the space and the progression of the representation of his relationship as subject with the chain of his discourse.

The complex process of reading a film, which has always seemed to be a delayed and duplicated reading, is, primarily, only the process of the representation operating between the two fields which form the elementary cell of the Place of Cinema. This explains the use of theatrical metaphors about the cinema as well as the profound relationship linking the cinema to the theatre: the place of a metaphorical representation, at once spatial and dramatic, of the relations of the subject to the signifier. Thus what we are here calling the suture is primarily the representation of that which, under the same heading, is now used to designate 'the relationship of the subject to the chain of its discourse': a representation sliding under the signifying Sum and burdened with a 'lack – the lack of someone – and with an Absent One which abolishes itself so that someone representing the next link in the chain (and anticipating the next filmic segment) can come forth. Given that the key to the process of any cinematic reading is provided by

* This phrase and all subsequent phrases given in quotation marks are quotations or paraphrases from J-A Miller's paper, given in translation on pp 24-34 above. [Translator]

the subject, which, however, does not know that its own function is at work and is being represented in the reading, then Bresson is probably the first film-maker, not so much to have put into practice, as to have posited the principle of the cinematic which prevents this function from operating out of time or in the void. *The Trial of Joan of Arc* is the first film to subject its syntax to the cinema's necessary representation of the subject's relation to its discourse.

However, it is unfortunate that Bresson has neglected his discovery, and hidden it from his own eyes, by his almost obsessive recourse, in *Au hasard*, *Balthazar*, to his favourite tricks like 'showing the effect before the cause'. Such tricks are nearly always impoverishing except when used with deliberate terrorist intentions, as they are by Lang. (Indeed it is no accident that all great creators of the cinema have had some recourse to tricks of this kind. By systematically resorting to retroactive effects of signification, they were, unwittingly, experimenting with the play of the signifier.) Unfortunately this shows that Bresson increasingly sees the 'exchange' as operating between two images (hence the irritating abandon in *Au hasard*, *Balthazar* of all depth of field) whereas, as we have seen, that exchange, as the effect of the suture, takes place first and foremost between the filmic field and its echo, the imaginary field. More seriously, the signified in *Au hasard*, *Balthazar* – which appears only at the end of the representation – bears the cost, as it were, of a representation which cannot be resolved because suturing is impossible, the imaginary field always remaining one of absence, so that only the (dead) letter and the syntax of the meaning are perceived.

The ideal chain of a sutured discourse would be one which is articulated into figures which it is no longer appropriate to call shot/reverse-shot, but which mark the need – so that the chain can function – for an articulation of the space such that the same portion of space be represented at least twice, in the filmic field and in the imaginary field – with all the variations of angle that the obliqueness of the camera with regard to the place of the subject allows. This ideal chain consists, as it progresses, of a duplicating representation, which demands that each of the elements composing its space and presenting its actors be separated and duplicated, and twice read or evoked in a to-and-fro movement which would need describing more precisely. This is itself punctuated by the perception of the framing which plays an essential role, since any evocation of the imaginary field relies upon it: that is the filmic field and the fourth side; the field of Absence and the field of the Imaginary; the signifier of Absence and the signifying Sum; the Absent One and the character who replaces it. . . .

That the signified can truly appear only at the conclusion of that act – hence not produced by the Sum alone (paralysed so

40 long as it is the signifier of the Absence that makes it an entity) but of the relation between the elements of the two fields made possible by its disappearance – demonstrates the symbolic signification of this representation. For just as the ‘signified to the subject’ seems like ‘an effect of signification governed by the repetition of the signifier’, itself correlative with the disappearance of the subject and its passing as a lack, so the signified, in the cinema, only appears at the end of a play of eclipses, at the end of an oscillation of the signifier, alternately representing the Absence and the artificial signifying Sum, whose subversive effect on the spectator (which Lang mastered so well), correlative with the momentary disappearance of the Absent One, is then annulled when the Absent One is replaced by someone.

Moreover it is easier to understand the role played by the Absent One in this process, since the structure of the subject is articulated in a ‘flickering in eclipses, like the movement which opens and closes the number, which delivers up the lack in the form of the 1 in order to abolish it in the successor’ – a comparison between the subject and zero, alternately a lack and a number, ‘taking the suturing place of the Absence (of the absolute zero) which moves below the chain (of numbers) in an alternating movement of representation and exclusion’. It designates globally the objects of the image as a signifier – thus requiring that the filmic continuum be divided into units as discrete as possible. But it also designates itself as a lack – that is, to return to Jacques-Alain Miller’s definition of the subject, as ‘the possibility of one signifier more’ announcing the next link in the chain, and anticipating the cutting up of the *énoncé* to follow – and finally vanishes when that link appears. Thus the Absent One, that frozen production of the spectator’s imaginary, is the direct demand of the signifier to be represented in an *énoncé* subjected to its order, and its eclipse ensures the suturing function of the subject of the discourse.

We have here only given a rough sketch of the functioning of an ideal type of cinematic *énoncé* whose total originality lies in it being spoken from a Place which is also that of a representation of the relations of the subject-spectator to the chain of his discourse, carried out with the very elements of that *énoncé*, thus illuminating the fundamental ambiguity of the cinematic. This ambiguity stems from the capacity to produce this necessary representation, only possible with its own elements and governing their ‘reading’; without it, ultimately, no reading is possible, and it becomes a duplicated speech, in which something is said to punctuate, articulate, and even eclipse what is said in the meantime, and in its process subjects it to its cinematic Place.

Having cast light on the truly *scenic* play of the cinematic signifier it now remains to examine at greater length its effects of signification.

In *The General* there is a scene, or rather a fragment of a scene inscribed within a single shot, which reveals the characteristics of the image as in slow motion; this is when the two armies meet on the banks of the river near the burnt bridge. A group of soldiers crosses the river, framed by the camera in high-angle long shot (but in fact, at this stage, the spectator does not yet perceive either the framing, or the distance, or the camera's position; the image is still for the spectator only a moving and animated photograph). Suddenly the enemy soldiers rise in the frame at the bottom of the image, inordinately larger than the others. The spectator takes a moment to realise, like the Poe character who sees a butterfly as large as a ship, that the soldiers have occupied a rise above the river, which was hidden by the position of the camera. Then the spectator experiences with vertiginous delight the unreal space separating the two groups; he himself is fluid, elastic, and expanding: he is at the cinema. A moment later, he retreats; he has discovered the framing. Suddenly, he senses the space he cannot see, hidden by the camera, and wonders, in retrospect, why such a framing was used. That question, although unanswered, will radically transform the spectator's mode of participation: this unreal space which a moment ago was the field of his *jouissance* has become the distance separating the camera from the protagonists who are no longer present, who no longer have the innocent 'being-there-ness' of a moment ago, but instead have a 'being-there-for-ness'. Why? In order to represent an Absent One, and to signify the absence of the character which the spectator's imagination puts in place of the camera. At the same time, or rather in the meantime, the filmic field, dilated by the spectator's reverie, has been tightened up. Its objects (the two armies, the slope, and the river) now form a signifying Sum, closed upon itself like the indivisible signification of a kind of absolute event. Yet the haunting presence of the other field and of the Absent One remains.

1. This metamorphosis of the image will now be described more systematically. In the previous example mention was made of a stage, which can be ignored from now on, in which the image was not perceived as a filmic field, but more like an animated photograph. This stage, prior to cinema, reveals nothing of its nature, but does demonstrate how, ultimately, it is only the filmic space, only the depth of its field, that are echoed by the other field, the side of the camera. It is within the trajectory of this reciprocal echo that the transition from the cinema to the cinematic, and vice-versa, takes place. In a hypothetical and purely mythical period, when the cinema alone reigned, enjoyed by the spectator in a dyadic relationship, space was still a pure expanse of *jouissance*, and the spectator was offered objects literally without anything

- 42 coming between them as a screen and thus prohibiting the capture of the objects. Suddenly however, prohibition is there in the guise of the screen; its presence first puts an end to the spectator's fascination, to his capture by the unreal. Its perception represents the threshold at which the image is abolished and denounced as unreal, before then being reborn, metamorphosed by the perception of its boundaries. (It is of course a simplification to say that the spectator perceives an image, framed and delimited, since he does not perceive simultaneously the framing, the space, and the filmed object. Perception of the framing always eclipses vision of the object at the same time as it puts an end to the spectator's *jouissance* in the space.)

Instead, a vacillating image re-appears, its elements (framing, space, and object) mutually eclipsing one another in a chaos out of which rise the fourth side and the phantom which the spectator's imagination casts in its place: the Absent One. The revelation of this absence is the key moment in the fate of the image, since it introduces the image into the order of the signifier, and the cinema into the order of discourse. In this metamorphosis, the filmic field, an expanse of *jouissance*, becomes the space separating the camera from the filmed objects – a space echoed by the imaginary space of the fourth side – and, similarly, the objects of the image become the representation of the Absent One, the signifier of its absence. What then remains of the undefined body of the image is literally only a signifier of insignificance. Yet out of this reduction the image is reborn as a signifying Sum, the uniting of its semantic traits which are in a way summoned to signify something together, a signifying Sum always echoed by a lack (absence) which threatens to annul it by reducing it to being nothing but its signifier.

2. From these stages – which we have described only sketchily, without giving more than an approximate account of the logic of their process – can be deduced the tragic and unstable nature of the image, a totality synchronically elusive, made of structurally opposite and mutually eclipsing elements. The cinema is characterised by an antinomy of reading and *jouissance*, because the space in fact always abolishes the object, and the depth of field makes the bodies inscribed within it vanish (in Preminger and Mizoguchi); but this is only possible with an eclipse of *signifiante** (and vice-versa) which enables the spectator, in his daydreaming, to capture

* 'Signifiante' is a term used by Barthes and Kristeva to describe the work or process of the signifier as production for the subject – as opposed to 'signification', which is concerned with the place of signifieds as product within a system. For a fuller definition see the introduction to R. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, London, Fontana 1977, and J. Kristeva, 'Signifying Practice and Mode of Production', *Edinburgh '76 Magazine*. [Translator]

the expressive traits of the image, the unexpected movement of a body or of the camera, and the sudden dilation of space. . . . 43
Through the oscillation of the filmic space, alternately field and sign, the image enters the order of the signifier, but only at the cost of its own reduction. The object is also in oscillation, being in fact the most volatile element of the image: it is always under threat of dissolution in the space, a shadow of itself at the moment at which the image is literally being reduced, and hidden behind its signification during the image's rebirth as signifying Sum. The oscillation of the signifier itself, alternately sign and letter frozen in its literalness only to evoke the absence of anyone, makes the cinema a unique form of speech, one which speaks itself, and sometimes speaks only of itself, whose fate rests with the Absent One; for the Absent One, whose nature is to vanish upon being named, disappears when someone, or indeed something, is introduced into its field.

This introduction alone fills the gap, erases the absence of the empty field, and sutures the cinematic discourse by enveloping it in a new dimension, the Imaginary: the fourth side, a pure field of absence, becomes the imaginary field of the film and the field of its imaginary. The cinema which seemingly is without horizon, does in fact possess one, an imaginary horizon, on the other side. Thus the ambiguity of the field, at once present and absent, unreal and imaginary, can be called cinematic since it is through this duality that the cinema engenders itself. The suturing effect of any presence in the imaginary field shows how, in the cinema, the space and the signifier join their effects even while vanishing; indeed, as in *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, only the articulation of space supports the semantic exchange between shots, and only the relationship between the objects of the image and an imaginary field where those objects are echoed by other objects, prevents the fixing of the signifying Sum, the freezing of meaning which threatens the speech of the film with having to manifest itself for ever – and this at a time when the spectator has been subverted by it – outside the filmic field producing the Sum, and before it is reflected in the imaginary field and meets its own echo.

To make a film always means outlining a field which evokes another field, in which a finger rises to designate – by hiding them – its objects as the signifier of its insignificance, before having them reappear – and die – as a signifying Sum. This signifying Sum, echoed by the absence producing it, does not suggest a plenitude of meaning – which the camera cannot attain immediately, since it is burdened with a lack which must always be satisfied. Instead it represents a particular effect of the cinematic signifier – a real terrorism of the sign – which corresponds to the moment, opposed to the moment of literal reduction, when signification actually penetrates the spectator as a sovereign speech, solitary and without echo. Therefore, the fate of cinematic speech,

44 abstracted from the objects conveying it, is to manifest itself alternately as a frozen letter, which signifies an absence during its advent, and as a terroristic and subversive speech. Between these two extreme phases, cinematic speech encounters an echo in the field of the imaginary which enables it to anchor itself in the field it comes from. But if the imaginary field remains the field of absence, its only echo is its futility and the anchoring cannot take place; the objects no longer carry it, the speech floats, spelt out, and it breaks as a result of being unsupported by the imaginary.

3. Up to now (except among a handful of great film-makers who understand that the absent field is as important as the present field and that the fate of the signifier is governed by their mutual articulation) the problem of the cinematic has only been raised by modern film-makers. In rejecting a space which today is still largely only one of fiction, they have put cinematic language under exemplary pressure, but at the risk of leading it to the threshold of reification. Surprisingly, in the light of *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, a similar reification affects *Au hasard, Balhazar*, a film whose failure, in our opinion, symbolises that of any cinema which refuses to come to terms with the duality of its space and to articulate it into cinematic fields. This makes Bresson without doubt the most ambiguous figure in modern cinema. In *Au hasard, Balhazar*, a strictly linear film, in which the camera only functions as a finger pointing out the signifying objects, whether those which it follows or those which it finds in its path, Bresson seems to have wanted to question all his syntactic procedures and, at the same time, as it were, suture through movement the discourse, which as a result is inevitably strewn with blanks and gaps. The camera movements themselves prevent the spectator's imaginary from functioning and from suturing the discourse, through the absence they continually produce, an absence which is only filled in rare scenes recalling *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, such as the meeting between Gérard and Marie; as a result the discourse endlessly signifies itself as a dead letter, and its syntax emerges at every instant as the only signified of the film. There is a continually noticeable decomposition of syntagms, for instance, in the scene in which Gérard and his acolyte load the donkey at the end of the film: after they have loaded 'the perfume, the stockings, and the gold', the camera halts on a sordid mess just as the characters leave the frame; the intention of meaning designates itself. . . .

Nevertheless, *The Trial of Joan of Arc* remains the model of the cinematic which takes on the specifically tragic nature of its language, even accentuates it, and allows the suture of a deliberately syncopated discourse. To begin with, Bresson very consciously worked on the times of the image, sometimes in order to create – as did Lang – a *fantastique* of the sign (shots of the registrar's hands and of the priest who makes a sign to Joan, so brief that

ultimately they can only be perceived as insignificant signifiers, 45 illegible messages), and sometimes in order to preserve the signs of the alteration they undergo during the literal reduction of the image: in the confrontations between Joan and her judge, the slight time lapse separating the moment of succession of the shots from the appearance – otherwise imperceptible without that delay – on Joan's face of the effects of the judge's words, the tightening of the throat, the movement of the lips, like the results of an invisible whip lash. After the syncopé produced by the change of shot, after the erasing of the absence by the presence of the other character on the other side of the camera, and the reconstruction as a cinematic field, through camera position, of the scene of the confrontation between the characters, this moment allows the sign to burst at its point of greatest efficiency, following the operation of the suture.

With infinite subtlety, Bresson has outlined and almost re-invented cinematic fields. Dispelling the illusions and ambiguities of a 'subjective' cinema, he has wilfully accentuated the divergence between the camera's position and that of the character placed on the same side, thereby introducing infinite modulations of shooting angles: the characters may either be almost face-on (the judge) or in three-quarter view (Joan). The variation of this angle of attack, which results in the executioner seeming strangely more vulnerable than his victim, would, if necessary, prove the importance of the field outlined by the camera, whose obliqueness indicates the spectator's own position. That the only possible position for the camera should be that oblique angle, shows that the 'spectator does not identify with any other character in the invisible field of the film, but occupies a position out of alignment both with the character and with the position of the Absent One which is only present in the imaginary when the character, who takes its place, is not there itself.

4. Thus the Absent One, this frozen production of the spectator's imaginary, manifests itself between two moments: one, when the cinema's speech is abolished in the spectator's cosmomorphic *jouissance*, and the other, when that speech traverses the spectator. In between these two moments the spectator recuperates his difference, an operation by which he is himself placed outside the frame, by positioning the Absent One as the subject of a vision which is not his own, and the image as the signifier of absence. Only during the intervals of such borderline moments is the spectator's imaginary able to function freely, and hence to occupy the place – evidenced by its spatial obliqueness – of a vanishing subject, decentred from a discourse which is closing itself, and suturing itself in it, and which the subject can only assume in the Imaginary, that is at once during the interval when he disappears as subject, and when he recuperates his difference, and from a

- 46 place which is neither the place where the character is positioned by the spectator's imagination – a character who is no more the spectator than he is the subject of the image as fictive image – (hence the unease produced by a shot/reverse-shot such as in *Kriemhild's Revenge*, and nearly all Lang's shots, where the camera often actually occupies the place of the character in that position); nor is it an arbitrary position forcing the spectator to posit perpetually the Absent One as the fictitious subject of a vision which is not his own and on which his imagination would stop short.

In a cinema free of subjective illusion, one can imagine what scope there would be, once again, for a linking of shots by the look determined by the unique angle which would allow the suture to take place – a suture which alone would allow one to reach, beyond fiction, the point dreamed of by Bresson where each image would only have an 'exchange' value. The field of such a cinematic, not yet born, would be less the space of an event than the field of emergence of the symbolic; its symbol could be the admirable shot/reverse-shot in *La Chasse au lion à l'arc* within which Rouch frames the dying lioness and the group of hunters praying before her. In *The Trial of Joan of Arc* Bresson only allows himself to show the signs of communication, unlike Flaherty who complacently purported to recreate the event of communication itself. Bresson does so within a cinematic field which, because he does not attempt to produce the illusion of its immediacy, gives back to the cinema a symbolic dimension, revealed in the very process of reading.

5. After experimenting with its characteristics, naively at first, then more and more deliberately (as with Lang and Hitchcock), the cinema today speaks of nothing else. Yet now that these properties are recognised, we look to that speech to recreate not an object but a site, a cinematic field which will be no longer the privileged means of embodying a fiction, but that for cinema's speech to unfold itself according to its properties, since it is through space that the cinema is born into the order of discourse, and it is from the place whose absence it evokes that it is designated as a speech and that its imaginary is displayed. It would be absurdly academic, however, to deduce from 'how to articulate that speech' only a more efficient way of distributing the cinema's signifier, and simply to expose a misunderstanding of its characteristics, as with *Au hasard, Balthazar*. For it is nevertheless essential to recognise that, in articulating the conditions and the limits of its signifying power, the cinema is also speaking of eroticism.

That in Bresson's masterpiece, which is about communication, and even more about eroticism (around which its tragedy explodes), he could only talk about it by creating a cinematic field which, at the same time, is the space of his own discourse recreated, and

the field of speech of the cinematic, indicates clearly enough the symbolic specificity of even the most simple cinematic space, reduced to its minimal unit – an absence and a presence; that is, the staging of a ‘passion’ of signifiers, a *mise-en-scène* of bodies and of the spectator himself who is privileged to represent the passion operating in communication, and in eroticism especially. For too long eroticism in the cinema has only been exploited or located on the filmic level; people talked about the eroticism of a camera-movement as improperly as they did about the camera-eye and possession of the world by the film-maker, etc. A substantial shift in point of view has in fact taken place; today the phenomenon of quasi-vision, peculiar to the cinema, only appears as the condition of an eroticism recognisable in the articulation of the filmic and the cinematic, and affecting the signifiers and the figures conveying them, thereby demonstrating that the very nature of the cinematic discourse is in question. The discovery that the cinema, in speaking itself, speaks of eroticism, and is the privileged space where eroticism can always be signified, should probably be credited to Lang; and although all the consequences are far from being drawn yet, this discovery engages the whole cinema.

POSTSCRIPT The following remarks sum up and attenuate somewhat the extremism of the article.

1. In the very process which is at the same time *jouissance* and ‘reading’ of the film – a ‘reading’ which in turn is signified and annulled, and by which the spectator is subverted – something is said which can only be discussed in erotic terms, and which is itself given as the closest representation of the actual process of eroticism.
2. Subjection of what is said in the *meantime* in the film is unavoidable for two reasons and in two ways: first the fate of the cinematic signifier is given by the articulations of the process; second, and more importantly, the process itself and all that is said in it, which takes place in a cinematic *space* making the film a *symbolic space*, always designates the seal of the symbolic, modified by its echo and modelled by its grid.
3. Thus, to say that the cinema, in speaking itself, in its place and from its specific place, speaks of eroticism, leads to questioning its symbols and figures, beyond eroticism. Indeed beyond that eroticism, the essentially *figurative* reality of the cinema is revealed in such films as *The Tiger of Bengal*, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, or *The Immortal Story*.

Stephen Heath

The article by Jacques-Alain Miller given in translation here introduced the concept of suture within the field of psychoanalysis; the article by Jean-Pierre Oudart, drawing on Miller, reproduced the concept for film theory where it has now achieved a certain currency – in both French and Anglo-American writing. The following notes attempt to provide a context for understanding suture, to indicate something of the terms of its original psychoanalytic elaboration and of its subsequent utilisation to specify the functioning of cinematic discourse.

I

Published in the first issue of *Cahiers pour l'analyse* in 1966, Miller's article is based on a paper delivered the previous year to Lacan's seminar at the Ecole Normale Supérieure.¹ Its concern is to propose suture as a necessary concept in the development of a 'logic of the signifier', a concept that Miller sees as being at every moment present in Lacan's work though never there named as such (a point to be qualified below). The article should thus be read as a contribution to Lacanian theory and is, in fact, a commentary on the account of the causation of the subject offered by Lacan in his seminar in 1964 (to which Miller is making direct reference throughout the final section on the relation of subject and signifier), generally available today in two versions: the transcript of the seminar itself and the paper 'Position de l'inconscient' written up in the same year (*SXI*, 185-208; *E*, 829-850).² To understand Miller's introduction of suture, therefore, is inevitably to turn back to the psychoanalytic theory of the subject as set out by Lacan.

The impetus of that theory is, of course, the experience of the unconscious. How then does psychoanalysis conceive of the posi-

1. Two discussions of the paper in the same year and context were also published in *Cahiers pour l'analyse*: S Leclair, 'L'analyste à sa place?', n 1, January-February 1966, pp 50-52; A Green, 'L'objet (a) de J Lacan, sa logique et la théorie freudienne', n 3, May-June 1966, pp 15-37.

2. *SXI* = J Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XI*, Paris 1973; *E* = J Lacan, *Écrits*, Paris 1966 ('Position de l'inconscient' is not included in the English selection from *Écrits*). [Since the writing of these notes, *Le Séminaire livre XI* has appeared in English as *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Hogarth Press, London 1977; the account of the causation of the subject referred to here can be found on pp 203-229.]

ion of the unconscious (to adopt the title of the paper by Lacan 49
 ust mentioned)? 'The unconscious is a concept forged on the
 race of what operates to constitute the subject; the unconscious
 s not a case defining in psychical reality the circle of that which
 does not possess the attribute (or the virtue) of consciousness' (E, 830). The unconscious is in no way 'first', 'in the beginning',
 or whatever; it does not constitute the subject, is not a simple
 division from consciousness; on the contrary, it is a concept
 orged on the trace of what operates to constitute the subject.
 The operation here is that of the order of the symbolic, language
 is 'cause of the subject' (E, 830), and the place of the symbolic,
 the locus of its operation, is the place of the Other. Hence there
 are two 'domains': the subject and the Other, with the uncon-
 scious 'between them their active break' (E, 839). Rather than a
 topic (leading so often in Freud to difficulties of fixed spatialisation,
 of rigid spatial imagery; as, for instance, the visualisation of the
 unconscious as a dark chamber before the room of the precon-
 scious beyond which lies conscious awareness), description of the
 psychical apparatus demands, exactly, a logic, a logic of the
 ignifier capable of following out the endless movement of the
 constitution of the subject, or, as later developed by Lacan, a
 topology, able to hold to the mobile surface of the subject's
 articulation.

As active break, the unconscious is finally not so much a position
 is an edge, the junction of division between subject and Other, a
 process interminably closing. In this connection, Lacan has a
 passage which, while pointing explicitly to a topology, neverthe-
 less involves stresses and terms that are important for Miller:

The place in question [the place from which it – ça, Es – speaks]
 is the entrance to the cave in regard to which Plato, as we know,
 guides us towards the exit, while one imagines seeing the psycho-
 analyst enter there. But things are less easy, because it is an
 entrance at which one only ever arrives at closing time (so this
 place will never be much good for tourists) and because the sole
 way to have it open a little is to call from within. All of which is
 not insoluble, if the "open, sesame!" of the unconscious is its
saving effect of speech, its being structure of language, but
 demands of the analyst that he or she come back on the mode of
 its closure. Gaping, flickering, an alternating suction . . . that is
 what we have to give account of, which is what we have under-
 taken by founding it in a topology. The structure of that which
 closes is inscribed in a geometry wherein space is reduced to a
 combining: strictly, it is what is called an edge' (E, 838).

The 'open, sesame!' of the unconscious is its being structure of
 language, effect of speech or discourse. From this recognition
 emerge the two repeated emphases in Lacan's elaboration of the
 idea of the unconscious as a concept forged on the trace of what

50 operates to constitute the subject: the unconscious is the discourse of the Other; the unconscious is structured as a language. The Other is the domain of the symbolic as 'locus of the signifying cause of the subject' (E, 841), distribution-circulation of signifiers within which the subject is produced – 'the locus from which the question of its existence may be posed it' (E, 549). Thus, crucially, the Other in Lacan is the radical thesis with respect to language of the 'primacy' and 'materiality' of the signifier: 'language imposes being' (SXX, 44).³ Far from the necessity that being be for me to speak of it, I must first of all speak for the problem of being to arise, the problem, for instance, of whether or not anything exists which corresponds to or satisfies what I am saying (hence in Miller the supporting of truth from the relations of subject and signifying chain). I must first of all speak, and first of all be spoken, be *bespoken*: produced from and for the Other, the order of discourse that I maintain (I as the very index of suture). Outside and given in the symbolic, a kind of turning point, the subject is a category of division, of lack (the lack in being that is the subject's place and experience in language – 'the drama of the subject in language is the experience of this *manque-à-être*' E, 655 – and the structure of its desire, its want – 'the desire of man is the desire of the Other' E, 268): between subject and Other, the unconscious is the breaking edge, a constant flickering of the subject, *flickering in eclipses* (to take up a term from Miller.) The unconscious is nowhere present, is only in the relations of the symbolic and the individual effected as subject in those relations, their structuring of desire – the unconscious exactly as discourse of the Other.

The subject is thus nothing other than that which 'slides in a chain of signifiers' (SXX, 48), its cause is the effect of language: 'by this effect, it is not cause of itself, carries in it the worm of the cause of its splitting' (E, 835). The unconscious is the fact of the constitution-division of the subject in language; an emphasis which can even lead Lacan to propose replacing the notion of the unconscious with that of the subject in language: 'it is a vicious circle to say that we are speaking beings; we are "speakings", a word that can be advantageously substituted for the unconscious'.⁴ Veritable treasure of signifiers, the unconscious is structured as a language; psychoanalysis, the 'talking-cure', developing precisely as an acute attention to the movement of the subject in the signifying chain.

It can be objected here that the idea of psychoanalysis as talking-cure in no way implies a 'linguistic version' of the unconscious and that Lacan is far from the substance of Freud's own account in this respect, Freud insisting, for example, that the uncon-

3. SXX = J Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XX*, Paris 1975.

4. 'Conférences aux Etats-Unis', *Scilicet* n 6-7, 1977, p 49.

scious knows only 'thing-presentations', not 'word-presentations' 51 which are the province of the preconscious-conscious.⁵ Such an objection, however, is raised from a fixed and secondary conception of language (the conception of linguistics itself). To say that the unconscious is structured as a language is not, for Lacan, to say that it is simply 'linguistic': the rhetoric of unconscious operations, the primary processes and their effects of meaning, requires an idea of linguistic activity vastly more complex and extensive than that involved in the language-object-of-study defined by linguistics (where is the linguistics that deals with the question of the construction of the subject?).⁶ Radically in excess of the linguistic thinking of its time, Freud's work is nevertheless bound by the terms of that thinking and thus often issues in formulations which repeat a limited objectification of language. Lacan's own emphasis, moreover, is still today given as a displacement of linguistics (not as its assumption): Saussure and Jakobson are used, are important, but shifted critically, recast by the psycho-analytic insertion of that question of the subject. Most recently, indeed, Lacan has employed the term '*lalangue*' specifically to indicate shift and recasting, over and against the distinction *langue*/*parole* (and its variants) with which linguistics works at the expense of an understanding of the subject in language. Where *langue* is a formal system to be described and *parole* its use by communicating agents, *lalangue* is a 'inconsistent multiplicity', neither system nor use but production, area of the problematic of subject and truth opened by psychoanalysis: 'The unconscious is a knowledge, a know-how with *lalangue*. And what is know-how-to-do with *lalangue* far exceeds what can be accounted for under the heading of language. *Lalangue* affects us first by everything it contains as effects that are affects. If we can say that the unconscious is structured as a language, it is in that the effects of *lalangue*, already there as knowledge, go well beyond everything the being who speaks is capable of stating' (SXX, 127).

'Everything arises from the structure of the signifier' (SXI, 188). Given the preceding remarks, let us now come to the actual terms of Lacan's account of the causation of the subject in two fundamental operations which stand in a circular though not reciprocal relation (to quote Miller quoting Lacan: cf SXI, 188 and E, 840).

The first of these operations is referred to by Lacan as alienation: the originating division of the subject with itself by virtue of its appearance in the play of signifiers:

5. See eg S Freud, 'The unconscious' (1915), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* Vol XIV, p 201.

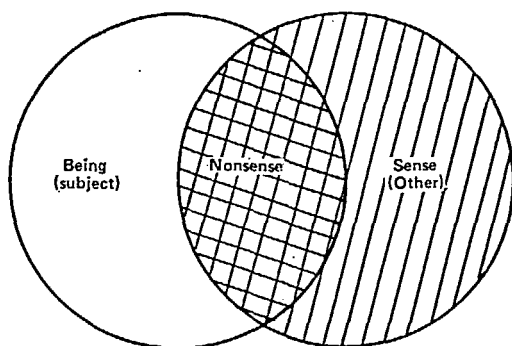
6. Demonstrated by Metz in the course of his detailed consideration of the psychoanalytic possibility of the figures metaphor and metonymy; C Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, Paris 1977, pp 251-340.

- 52 'The signifier occurring in the place of the Other not yet grasped has the subject emerge there from the being as yet without speech, but at the price of fixing it. What *there was* there ready to speak – in the two senses the French imperfect gives to *il y avait*: putting it in the moment before (it was there and is there no longer) but also in the moment after (a little more and it was there from having been able to be there) – what *there was* there disappears from being now only a signifier' (E, 840-1).

This alienation is not the fact of the Other (there is no notion of 'enmity', 'inauthenticity', or whatever) but the fact of the subject. As effect and not source, the subject is subject by division, division in the symbolic, is *cut out* by the signifier, represented and excluded, becoming some *one* by its constitution as *less-than-one* – 'the subject is first constituted as minus one'.⁷ Since the system of signifiers is by definition complete, the subject can only be entered there as this structure of lack-in-being: 'a trait which is traced from its circle without being able to be counted there; symbolisable by the inherency of a (-1) in the set of signifiers' (E, 819). What makes the symbolic force of castration is then, as it were, its revelation of lack, its summary metaphor of the division of the subject: 'the phallus functions as signifier of the lack in being that its relation to the signifier determines in the subject' (E, 710); 'the phallus . . . is the signifier of the very loss that the subject suffers from the fragmentation of the signifier' (E, 715).

Lacan provides this definition of the alienation of the subject with little illustrations-cum-demonstrations. Consider, for instance, the conjunction *or*. It is possible to distinguish an exhaustive *or* ('I'll go to Glasgow or Edinburgh': the choice is absolute, to go to the one is to not go to the other), an equivalent *or* ('I'll do it one way or another': which way is unimportant, all ways are as equal in the interests of doing it 'somehow') and, less commonly perceived, an *or* which Lacan likens to the Latin *vel*: 'Your money or your life!' – choose money and you lose life and money; choose life and you lose the money, your life is reduced thereby, and anyway death will still be your lot. Lacan characterises this as the 'alienating *vel*' and moves it across into his account of the operation of the subject in language: 'the *vel* which condemns the subject to appear only in this division – if on one side the subject appears as sense, produced by the signifier, on the other it appears as *aphanisis*' (SXI, 191; *aphanisis* is a word borrowed from Ernest Jones to refer to the constant eclipsing, the *fading* of the subject). At which point set theory is called upon to add clarification, Lacan giving a Venn diagram for the union and intersection of classes: 'Let us illustrate the *vel* by what concerns us: the being of the

7. J Lacan, *L'Identification* (pirate edition of the 1962 seminar), Paris, no date, p 24.

*Alienation*

subject, the subject which is there under sense. If we choose the being, the subject disappears, escapes us, falls into non-sense; if we choose the sense, then sense is only left curtailed of the part of non-sense which is, strictly speaking, what constitutes, in the realisation of the subject, the unconscious. In other words, it is in the nature of this sense such as it emerges in the field of the Other to be in a large part of its field eclipsed by the disappearance of being induced by the very function of the signifier' (SXI, 192).

In other words again, forged on the trace of what operates to constitute the subject, the unconscious between subject and Other is the *action* of division: 'so if I talk of the unconscious as of that which opens and closes, this is because its essence is to mark that time by which, born with the signifier, the subject is born divided; the subject is that occurrence which just before, as subject, was nothing, but which, scarcely has it appeared, sets as signifier' (SXI, 181).

The second fundamental operation in the causation of the subject is described as that of separation, a term stretched on the racks of equivocation and etymology to mean not simply 'separation' but also 'to put on', 'to parry', and 'to engender' – how does the subject procure itself in the signifier? Separation is the moment of the shift in what Miller will call 'the time of the engendering'.

Effect of the signifier under which it slides, the subject comes back on – 'attacks' – the intervals of the signifying chain, takes up the desire of the Other: *what does it want in what it says?*

'It is in the interval between the signifiers of its alienating articulation that lies the desire offered for the subject to grasp in the experience of the discourse of the Other, of the first Other with which it has to deal, let us say, for illustration, here the mother. It is insofar as its desire goes beyond or stays this side of what she says, what she intimates, what she brings out as meaning, insofar as her desire is unknown, in this lack or want, that is constituted the subject's desire. The subject – by a process not without its trickery, not without presenting that basic torsion

- 54 thanks to which what the subject finds is not what inspired its movement of finding – thus returns to the starting point, which is that of its lack as such, the lack of its *aphanisis*’ (SXI, 199).

The separation of the subject is thus its passage in this metonymy of desire, its self-procuration from and for the Other in a kind of interminable rerun of the signifiers in which it is originally divided and to which it is thereby subordinated for a second time; the subject now taking place in relation to the Other, to what it finds wanting in the discourse of the Other, separating, responding, parrying, putting on images, caught in a specific problematic of representation (‘a signifier represents a subject for another signifier’ E, 840) and fantasy (the postponement of the truth of division, of *aphanisis*):—‘this second subordination does not simply loop round to complete the effect of the first by projecting the topology of the subject in the instant of fantasy; it seals it, refusing to the subject of desire that it know itself effect of speech, what it is to be nothing other than the desire of the Other’ (E, 835-6). In the separation of the subject, its passage, is given the *encroachment* of the unconscious, the permanent action of the edge: one lack covers another (the originating division of the subject in the signifier run over by the divisions – the gaps, the desire – to which the subject replies in the signifier), which indeed is the whole expense of the subject, thenceforth held in the ceaselessly displacing join of symbolic and imaginary, the very drama: ‘The drama of the subject in language is the experience of its lack-in-being. . . . It is because it parries this moment of lack that an image comes to the position of bearing all the cost of desire: projection, function of the imaginary. As against which, there is an index at the core of being, designating its breach: introjection, relation to the symbolic’ (E, 655).

It is to this account of the causation of the subject that Miller’s introduction of the concept of suture is proposed as a contribution. Via the reference to Frege and number theory (indications for which reference are to be found in Lacan; see, for example, SXI, 205), to the double movement of the zero lack and the zero number, Miller’s purpose is precisely to describe the relation of subject and signifier, the metaphor/metonymy of the subject in the signifying chain:

‘If the series of numbers, metonymy of the zero, begins with its metaphor, if the 0 member of the series as number is only the standing-in-place suturing the absence (of the absolute zero) which is carried on under the chain according to the alternating movement of a representation and an exclusion, then what is there to stop us from seeing in the restored relation of the zero to the succession of numbers the most elementary articulation of the subject’s relation to the signifying chain?’

The specific concern of the article is thus the symbolic and its operation; hence, indicatively, the recourse to mathematical logic and the insistence on the general extension of the suturing function: 'Suture names the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse: we shall see that it figures there as the element which is lacking, in the form of a stand-in. For, while there lacking, it is not purely and simply absent. Suture, by extension – the general relation of lack to the structure of which it is an element, inasmuch as it implies position of a taking-the-place-of.' The logic of the signifier within which suture is to exist as a concept is a 'general logic', the formal disposition of all fields of knowledge. To instance suture, Miller points at once, as though to its immediate index, to the 'I' of an utterance: the utterance states a place of the subject at the same moment that it splits from that place by the very fact of the place of the utterance itself, the place from which the statement is made; the subject of the enounced and the subject of the enunciation never fully come together, are always in the *distances* of the symbolic, the subject not one in its representation in language. In the light of which instance, however, it can be seen that the appeal to logic, to the idea of a logic, is simultaneously the emergence of a question that disrupts any notion of a closed formal system (so that extension and generality are themselves the terms of the insertion of that question into all fields); much in the way Lacan himself, in a rarely mentioned essay on 'Le temps logique' (E, 197-213), opens up in logic the time of the enunciation, inserts a reflection on the 'I'. The dimension of truth to which Miller adapts the concept of suture is the dimension not of logic in its classic accounts but, exactly, of the *logic of the signifier*, that is, of psychoanalysis. When Lacan talks of 'the division of the subject between truth and knowledge' (E, 864), the truth is that of psychoanalysis as attention to the drama of the subject, is that of the knowledge made possible by such an attention, radically other to the knowledge of the subject's self-possession as 'I' ('we cannot ask it of the subject as I' E, 819). Thus it is not surprising that, in reaction to Miller's paper, the psychoanalyst Leclaire should be found eager to insist that the analyst be recognised as, by definition, the person who *'does not suture'*.⁸

Not surprising because the concept of suture, specifying the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse, cannot be a concept merely for the symbolic (is not a concept of logic). Suture names not just a structure of lack but also an availability of the subject, a certain closure, much as the turn of the second fundamental operation in Lacan procures the subject: the 'I' indicates lack and availability well enough. It is not surprising again, therefore, that Lacan's own use of the term 'suture' (prior

8. S Leclaire, art cit, p 51.

56 to Miller's paper and in the course of a discussion in which Miller participates) gives it the sense of a 'pseudo-identification', defines it as 'junction of the imaginary and the symbolic' (SXI, 107), nor that subsequent examples of its use by Lacanian theorists should be with this same stress. Jean-Claude Milner, for example, writing of the objectification of language by linguistics, the limit of its knowledge of language as that of the 'speaking subject', comments: 'the speaking subject, point without dimension, desire or unconscious, is strictly tailored to the measure of the subject of the enunciation and is made to mask it, or more exactly to suture it'.⁹ The stake is clear: the 'I' is a division but joins all the same, the stand-in is the lack in the structure but nevertheless, simultaneously, the possibility of a coherence, of the filling in. At the end of the suturing function is the ego, the *me*: 'it's me!', the little linguistic scenario of the ego – that I am the only one who can say, can say insofar as I am *one*. The ego is not to be confused with the subject: it is the fixed point of imaginary projection and identification, where the subject as such is always on the side of the symbolic, the latter the order of its very constitution; but then, precisely, there is no ego without a subject, terrain of its necessity and its hold: function of the symbolic, suture is towards the imaginary, the moment of junction – standing in, a taking place, a something, a *some one there*.

II

It is from this psychoanalytic context that Oudart lifts the concept of suture into the field of film theory in the 1969 *Cahiers du Cinéma* article translated here. As a result of that article (and of a number of subsequent pieces by Oudart developing his initial formulations¹⁰), the concept has attained the currency referred to at the beginning of these notes; currency in France, particularly, of course, amongst writers involved with or close to *Cahiers du Cinéma*,¹¹ and, following an influential exposition in English of Oudart's work by Daniel Dayan in 1974, in theoretical writing

9. 'L'amour de la langue', *Ornicar?* n 6, p 43.

10. See especially (all references are to issues of *Cahiers du Cinéma*): 'Bresson et la vérité' n 216, October 1969, pp 53-56; 'Travail, lecture, jouissance' (with Serge Daney) n 222, July 1970, pp 39-50; 'L'effet de réel' n 228, March-April 1971, pp 19-26; 'Notes pour une théorie de la représentation' (I) n 229, May-June 1971, pp 43-45; 'Notes . . . ' (II) n 230, July 1971, pp 43-45; 'Un discours en défaut' (I) n 232, October 1971, pp 4-12; 'Un discours . . . ' (II) n 233, November 1971, pp 23-26.

11. see eg Pascal Bonitzer, *Le regard et la voix*, Paris 1976, pp 17, 31, 47-48, 105, 130, 140-1.

in Britain and North America;¹² hence the decision to make available the original texts in this present issue of *Screen*. The notes that follow in no way attempt to repeat Oudart again or to set out all the detail of the various positions (Dayan's exposition, Rothman's arguments against Oudart and Dayan, and so on); simply, they try to demonstrate something of what is at stake in the concept of suture in relation to film, hoping to add clarifications here and there, raising one or two questions, perhaps advancing a little.¹³

In his article, Oudart offers a description of the movement of the constitution of the cinematic and its subject in the process of reading a film. Suture now specifies the logic of the signifier in cinema ('the logic of the cinematic'): 'suture represents the closure of the cinematic enounced in conformity with the relationship sustained with it by its subject (the filmic subject or rather the cinematic subject), recognised and set in its place, the spectator'.

As described by Oudart, the process of reading a film goes in stages, the first of which is a moment of sheer jubilation in the image (the spectator 'fluid, elastic, expanding' – see the account of the experience of the shot from *The General*); a moment, as it were, untroubled by screen and frame, prior to the articulation of cinema. Awareness of the frame then breaks this initial relation, the image now seen in its limits; the space which, just before, was the pure extent of the spectator's pleasure becomes a problem of representation, of being-there-for – there for an absent field, outside of the image ('the fourth wall'), for the phantom character that the spectator's imagination poses in response to the problem: 'the absent one'. Crucially, what this realisation of absence from the image at once achieves is the definition of the image as discontinuous, its production as signifier: the move from cinema to cinematic, cinema as discourse: 'The revelation

12. Daniel Dayan, 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1974, pp 22-31. Criticism of Dayan's article is to be found in William Rothman, 'Against the System of the Suture', *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1975, pp 45-50. (These two pieces are included in *Movies and Methods* ed Bill Nichols, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1976, pp 438-59; references here will be to this reprinting.) Discussion and extension can be found in: Claire Johnston, 'Towards a Feminist Film Practice', *Edinburgh '76 Magazine*, pp 50-59; Stephen Heath, 'On Screen, in Frame: Film and Ideology', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* vol 1 n 3, August 1976, pp 251-65; 'Narrative Space', *Screen* v 17 n 3, Autumn 1976, pp 68-112; 'Anata mo', *Screen* v 17 n 4, Winter 1976/77, pp 49-66; 'Film Performance', *Ciné-tracts* n 2, 1977, pp 7-17; 'The Question Oshima', *Wide-Angle* v II n I, 1977; Mark Nash, *Dreyer*, BFI, London 1977.

13. Much of what will be said in these notes can be read as a supplement to the article on 'Narrative Space' cited in the previous footnote, to which the reader is thus generally referred.

58/ of this absence is the key-moment in the fate of the image, since it introduces the image into the order of the signifier and cinema into the order of discourse.' What then operates, classically, is the effacement (or filling in) of the absence, the suturing of the discourse – its movement as in a continuity of articulation – by the reappropriation of the absence within the film, a character in the film coming to take the place of the absent one posed by the spectator; suture as 'the abolition of the absent one and its resurrection in some one'; 'the pure field of absence becomes the imaginary field of the film and the field of its imaginary'.

The major emphasis in all this is that the articulation of the signifying chain of images, of the chain of images as signifying, works not from image to image but from image to image through the absence that the subject constitutes. Cinema as discourse is the production of a subject and the subject is the point of that production, constantly missing in and moving along the flow of images, the very assurance of the flow, with suture, as it were, the culmination of that assurance: '[*The Trial of Joan of Arc*] reveals by and for whom the operation of suture works: the filmic subject, the spectator, and from a place which, although remaining empty when he goes to vanish into the filmic field, must nevertheless be reserved for him throughout the film if he is not to refrain from fulfilling his role of imaginary subject of the cinematic discourse'. The awareness of absence breaks the immediate delight in the image; that absence is posed by the spectator as an absence of, the absent field of an absent one; that absent field is reappropriated into the film, the place of the absent one is filled by a character in the film; thus the pure field of absence becomes the imaginary field of the film, given as absent from the film, and the field of its imaginary, given in terms of the film's fiction; thus the break in the initial relation with the image is sutured, sutured across the spectator constituted as cinematic or filmic subject,¹⁴ essential to the realisation of image as signifier and to the articulation of shots together. Which is Oudart's reference to Miller: the subject is a moving function of the signifying chain (where a signifier represents a subject for another signifier), its structure a 'flickering in eclipses' (an expression cited and used by Oudart); here, the subject is ceaselessly in and out of the film, the ceaseless position of exchange: 'that "exchange" of which Bresson talks, thanks to which the signified truly appears'. The subject makes the meanings the film makes for it, is the turn of the film as discourse: 'the key to the process of any cinematic reading is provided by the subject, itself

14. Both 'cinematic subject' and 'filmic subject' occur in Oudart; the latter insofar as he is describing the process of reading a film, the former insofar as that description is given in the context of an account of how films work discursively, of cinematic discourse.

not knowing, while carrying it out, that it is its function which is operating and which is there represented'. This position of exchange, this turn, moreover, is the determination of the *obliquity* stressed by Oudart: the spectator is neither character nor absent one: 'the spectator does not identify with the character located in the invisible field of the film, occupies a position out of place with it, staggered from that of the absent one who is only imaginarily there when the character is not there and whose place this latter takes'. The imaginary of the spectator and the imaginary of the film move apart together: the spectator poses the absent one for the movement of the fiction of the film which filling in its place – the suture as character for absent one, from the imaginary field of the film to the field of its imaginary – frees the spectator's imaginary once again for the renewal of the movement. 59

It can thus be noted that suture for Oudart is very much a concept relating to the junction of the symbolic and the imaginary, with the emphasis in fact falling on its support of the imaginary. Suture closes cinematic discourse (the articulation of cinema as discourse), closes the spectator-subject in that process, ceaselessly, throughout the time of the film which then sets out a constant repetition of the subject as difference and a constant reappropriation of that difference in the passage across the spectator from absent one to some one. What is quite difficult immediately in Oudart's account, however, is the status given to the concept – a difficulty which can be demonstrated by considering how Bresson is used in the article.

In Miller the concept of suture is not evaluative but descriptive, introduced to specify the logic of the signifier, the relation of the subject in the signifying chain; in Oudart, tracing the logic of the cinematic, it becomes at once involved with 'the tragic and vacillating nature of the image', with 'the specifically tragic nature of cinematic language'. Cinema as discourse, that is, is seen as implicated in loss, the loss of the totality of the image, the loss of the extreme pleasure of absorption in the image as the spectator is set as the subject of the film: 'the cinema is characterised by an antinomy of reading and pleasure'. If this is the case, however, it is then necessary to develop an effective theory of the different instances of pleasure in the cinema, to offer an adequate account, for example, of the field of the imaginary of a film. Despite scattered indications and a final note pointing to something of the problem, Oudart does not do this, a failure which is symptomatic of a certain slide in the terms of the article. Thus, when Oudart describes the spectator's initial possession of the image (the spectator totally possessed by the image), the terms he uses are those of the child's experience in the mirror-phase: dual – dyadic – relation, jubilation, totality, a kind of extensive-

60 ness of pleasure, imaginary. At the same time, indicatively, the moment of possession in these terms is qualified as 'purely mythical'; 'indicatively', because the symbolic cannot be made to follow the imaginary in cinema in this way: cinema is not the mirror-phase, which any spectator-subject of a film has already accomplished (as against the little infant who can come to the film but not come as its spectator), being always already in reading. In this sense, the moment of the image Oudart stresses is not 'before' but 'after' the symbolic, is much more the dispersion of the subject-ego than the anticipation of its mastery (look again at the passage devoted to *The General*). Or rather, since the point is not to shift to a simply contrary position, what is in question is a complex and multiple play of symbolic and imaginary, the production of the spectator as subject in the film in that play: it is not the spectator's imaginary, as Oudart at times appears to state, which sutures the discourse; rather, the suturing function includes the spectator as part of an imaginary production.

In this respect, then, the reference continually made to Bresson's work becomes somewhat problematic. Bresson is presented as the discoverer of suture, the cineaste who realises the existence and operation of the cinematic subject, the passage across the spectator (hence the displacement of simple notions of 'subjective cinema'). *The Trial of Joan of Arc* is important as 'the first film to submit its syntax to the cinema's necessary representation of the subject's relation to its discourse'. Leaving aside the usual doubts as to the idea of 'the first film', it could be accepted with Oudart that Bresson's film does provide an effectively visible demonstration of the process of the articulation of cinema as discourse and its suture. What is less easy is to understand why, in contrast, *Au hasard, Balthazar* should be criticised as a film which, 'purely linear' but also 'a decomposition of syntagms', does not suture, does not fill in its absences, 'a representation which cannot be resolved because suture is impossible, because the imaginary field is always that of an absence': 'the camera movements in *Balthazar* are precisely, by the absence they create at every moment and which is only filled in in rare scenes recalling *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (the meeting between Gérard and Marie), what prevent the spectator's imaginary from working and suturing the discourse'. The problem is the evaluation, with behind that the status accorded suture in the description given. *The Trial of Joan of Arc* is praised because, within the system of the suture, it assumes the specifically tragic nature of cinematic language; *Au hasard, Balthazar* is condemned because it does not, because it fails fully to realise the properties of that language, 'its discourse endlessly signifies itself, dead letter, and its syntax emerges at every instant as the only signified of the film'. The system of the suture seems in this context to be something of an essence of cinema, its veritable 'passion' (note here the manner in which

the presence or absence of a feature like depth of field can provide an immediate criterion for judgement: the use of images without depth in modern cinema hides the fundamental movement of cinema; *Balthazar* is characterised by an irritating abandonment of all depth of field; and so on). Part of the praise for *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, however, is insofar as it demonstrates the system, exposes it, laying out the process of reading a film and thereby offering a certain experience of the symbolic: 'Far removed from the complacencies of a cinema such as that of Flaherty, who claimed to recreate the very event of communication, Bresson allows himself only to show us its signs; but he does so within a cinematic field which, because it makes no attempt to give the illusion of its immediacy, restores to it a symbolic dimension revealed in the actual process of its reading'. The wavering mesh of formulations seems finally to depend on a kind of estimation of a potentiality of cinema, almost a poetics of film (not without echoes of the 'poetic function' perspective of Noel Burch's contemporary *Praxis du cinéma*¹⁵): 'Now that all its properties are recognised, we look to that speech to recreate not an object but a site, a cinematic field which will no longer be the privileged means of realising a fiction but that for cinema's speech to unfold itself according to its properties, since it is through space that the cinema is born into the order of discourse, from the place whose absence it evokes that it is designated as speech and that its imaginary is deployed.'

Elsewhere, Oudart is perfectly clear that the system of the suture is a particular cinematic writing (even if that writing be largely dominant) and it is this emphasis that is developed by Dayan in his indicatively entitled piece 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema'. The references to tragedy and Bresson are dropped, the term ideology taken up: the system of the suture is grasped as the ideological operation of the process of cinematic discourse; the operation, in fact, of a constant unity of the subject, a certain bind of coherence that Oudart describes as 'theological' (hence, probably, the capital letters accorded to 'absence' and 'the absent one' in the original article):

'An essentially theological cinema, intended for a profoundly religious spectator, in the Lacanian sense of someone who leaves to the Other (God, the Artist, the Absent One) the burden of the cause, demanding of that Other the guarantee of a meaning supposed not to be produced by any scriptural work, supposed to proceed directly from a vision, from a look which gives meaning to things. A theological cinema again in that its writing comes

15. *Praxis du cinéma*, Paris 1969 (trans as *Theory of Film Practice*, New York and London 1973).

62 down to proving the visible by the invisible and vice versa: cinema of revelation, incarnation and grace. Writing which has had as its function to transform a fantasy into fiction and a fiction into vision, the Absent One into some one, the spectator into a double of himself and the doubling of the filmed object. . . .'¹⁶

The question as to the status of suture must be considered further in this context. Characterised as 'the tutor-code of classical cinema', the system of suture is defined as a historical articulation of cinema as discourse, as a writing in the sense in which Barthes uses the term in *Writing Degree Zero*;¹⁷ one can thus talk of 'the cinema of suture' and stress, for example, shot/reverse-shot as its exemplary figure. Dayan, however, hesitates: on the one hand, there are other cinematic systems besides that of the suture;¹⁸ on the other, the system of the suture is to classical cinema as verbal language is to literature.¹⁹ The latter notion is important in its confusion. Verbal language is the matter of expression of literature, its ground and horizon, the system or code of any discursive realisation (literature being a whole set of discursive realisations). While the problem of the relations of linguistic system and social-ideological formation is a difficult and fully contemporary one, the terms of that problem are not such as simply to equate language and ideology. If the system of the suture is a particular ideological system (a 'writing'), it cannot be compared with verbal language. That Dayan does so compare it is symptomatic of the muddled status of the concept: in Miller and some Oudart, suture is descriptive of the production of the very possibility of signification; in some Oudart and most Dayan, suture is an ideological operation, which the 'privileged example'²⁰ of shot/reverse-shot demonstrates and resumes (so much so that Rothman is able to take 'system of the suture' as synonymous with 'point-of-view cutting'²¹).

16. Oudart, 'Travail, lecture, jouissance', cit, pp 45-46.

17. Hence a difficulty in the translation of the Oudart article: the term 'cinématographique' is translated as 'cinematic', thus in accordance with its use in Metz and rendering a descriptive generality; equally, however, and more appropriately, it might be given as 'cinematographic', the 'logique du cinématographe' being the logic of a writing, the definition of a cinematic discourse, thus in accordance with Bresson, who opposes theatrical cinema with *le cinématographe*, 'writing in sounds and images which forms a visual and auditory text' (see *Notes sur le cinématographe*, Paris 1975; trans *Notes on Cinematography*, New York 1977).

18. Dayan, 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', p 450.

19. Ibid, p 439.

20. Ibid, p 451.

21. Rothman, 'Against the System of the Suture', p 454.

What is at stake here, the real problem, is exactly the understanding of cinema as discourse, of *enunciation and subject of enunciation* in cinema. In an early essay, Metz insisted on a correspondence between the filmic image and the sentence in natural language; the image is always actualised: 'A close-up of a revolver does not mean "revolver" (a purely virtual lexical unit) but at the very least, and without speaking of the connotations, it signifies "Here is a revolver!"'.²² Both Dayan and Rothman are in agreement that this must be regarded as mistaken: the single shot is grammatically incomplete: it is the sequence of shots which is a 'statement' (Dayan) or a 'sentence' (Rothman).²³ The terminology is confused and confusing: a sentence is a methodological abstraction of linguistics; outside of that abstraction, there is no sentence which is not an utterance, the term of an act of enunciation. What Metz points to is the fact of a shot as utterance, its being-there-for, its address; every image is the force of an event, not some simple presence of a word. That force, however, comes with a certain 'innocence' (the ideological potential of the photographic and filmic image), the marks of enunciation are relatively unspecified in the image (there are no equivalents, for instance, to the pronouns in language); we know how to contradict a linguistic utterance, we are much less sure with a single image (hence the common tendency to see the image as corresponding to a word, hence notions of cinema as 'a system of signs where the object is the sign of the object itself'²⁴), are confronted with its apparent completeness as image (hence the problem for a Godard of 'sounds which are already right on images which are still false': the image will always be false inasmuch as it brings with it an effacement of the act of its proposition; truth is to be grasped not simply in the enounced but equally in the enunciation, in the distances, gaps, contradictions of the two). Which completeness, coming back round once more to the image as utterance, is, precisely, only apparent: the image is never complete in itself (if it were, there would be no place for a viewer, hence, finally, no place for any image) and its limit is its address (the limit where it enters the chain, completes with the subject it thus entertains). To understand cinema as discourse, the general aim of the Oudart article, is to understand the relation of that address in the movement of the image, in the movement of and between shots.

The realisation of cinema as discourse is the production at

22. C Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, Paris 1968, p 72 (*Film Language*, New York 1974, p 67).

23. 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', pp 439, 449, 450; 'Against the System of the Suture', p 457.

24. R Jakobson, 'Entretien sur le cinéma', in *Cinéma: théories, lectures* (special issue of the *Revue d'esthétique*), Paris 1973, p 66.

64 every moment through the film of a subject address, the specification of the play of incompleteness-completion. What suture can serve to name is this specification, variously articulated but always a function of representation (the play for a subject, its taking place). The difficulty in the Oudart lies in the collapse of the process of specification into the single figure of the absent one, a figure to which Miller's account of suture as necessary concept for a logic of the signifier makes no appeal, referring solely to the Other as site of the distribution-circulation of signifiers. Oudart, beginning effectively from the demonstration of a particular film (*The Trial of Joan of Arc*) and the perspective offered by that demonstration on the historical development of cinema as discourse, describes a specific regime of the junction of symbolic and imaginary, a specific return on the subject (heavily dependent on the exploitation of point-of-view cutting), and in so doing, given the terms of this – dominant – specification, asserts the absent one (or the Absent One) for the Other, the latter then disappearing from the argument. The system Oudart considers is one in which difference is taken up within a structure of absence, and the making up of absence in the interests of guaranteeing the constancy – the consistency (the definition of the imaginary is that it consists, that it hangs together) – of the returned subject; the absent one is an element in that structure of guarantee, covers the symbolic: the spectator is to be implicated, as subject of the film, and by the investing of the very movement which is cinema's supplement to the photograph, the motion of the picture, the succession of shots, in a narrative action and as the true vision of that action, the dual representation – of and to the subject – to which Oudart's description responds with its stress on inclusion and obliquity.

Two kinds of problem can thus be distinguished: those concerning the description of the particular discursive specification of cinema; those concerning characterisation of a general logic of cinematic discourse. Attention must now be given to one or two points relating to the former, points indeed that also bear on the latter, to which they will eventually lead.

Consider the 'privileged example' of shot/reverse-shot to which reference has already been made. For Oudart, that figure stands in some sort as the very fact of the suturing operation he describes, its ideal: 'the ideal chain of a sutured discourse, articulated in figures which it is no longer appropriate to call shot/reverse-shot but which mark the need, so that the chain can function, for an articulation of space such that the same portion of space be represented at least twice, in the filmic field and in the imaginary field (with all the variations of angle that the obliqueness with regard to the place of the subject allows). . . .' It is the obliqueness that renders the term 'shot/reverse-shot' inappropriate:

leaving aside the scattered examples of the *Kriemhild's Revenge* variety ('aberrations'), the position of the camera is always more or less differed from that of the character's look, and it is with this difference that the system of suture is described as working; as Dayan puts it: 'The absent-one's glance is that of a nobody which becomes (with the reverse shot) the glance of a somebody (a character present on the screen). Being on screen he can no longer compete with the spectator for the screen's possession. The spectator can resume his previous relationship with the film. The reverse shot has "sutured" the hole opened in the spectator's imaginary relationship with the filmic field by his perception of the absent-one.'²⁵

There are two highly critical assessments of this discussion of suture and shot/reverse-shot which need to be considered here, one by Rothman in the article already cited, the other by Barry Salt in a recent paper on 'Film Style and Technology in the Forties'.²⁶ Salt has carefully studied the development of 'angle-reverse angle cutting' ('taken to include all cuts which change the camera angle from a direction which is within 45 degrees of the eyeline of a person appearing in a shot through a sufficient angle to fall within 45 degrees from the eyeline in the other direction . . . the general category of "angle-reverse angle" cuts is also taken to include cuts from a watcher to his point of view, as this seems to be the usual attitude to the definition') and provides percentages of the occurrence of such cuts based on a corpus of some two hundred films from the twenties to the present day, concluding that 'the bulk of films continue to have between 30-40% reverse angle cuts, as they have since the nineteen-thirties'. On the basis of his findings, Salt criticises Dayan for claiming that the majority of cuts in classical cinema are according to a shot/reverse-shot pattern and then develops that criticism into what he regards as a fundamental objection: 'Apart from the fact that in the vast majority of films such cuts form a minority, there is no doubt that films without them can work powerfully on the audience; eg *Birth of a Nation*. And further, if the device is so powerful, why is it not pushed to extremes (say 70%) in all commercial films, rather than just a few?' Correctly, Salt identifies something of the tendency towards the equation of suture and shot/reverse-shot or point-of-view cutting (the Dayan passage in question refers to the latter: 'there are also moments when the image does not represent anyone's point of view; but in the classical narrative cinema these are relatively exceptional'²⁷) and indicates the failings of any simple account of

25. 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', p 449.

26. Forthcoming in *Film Quarterly*; quotations are from a copy of the typescript supplied by the author. [Now published: *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1977, pp 46-57.]

27. *Ibid*, p 447.

66 classical cinema deriving from a crude literalisation of that equation. In so doing, however, he remains blind to the importance of the notion of suture for understanding operations of cinematic discourse, to the possibility that the shot/reverse-shot pattern might be a fundamental – but not the only – articulation of suture (the statistics then demonstrating this, showing a steady, regular maintenance of the films of classical cinema within its terms: 30-40%); that, consequently, suture is a multiple functioning of the discursive organisation of any given classical cinema film.

Rothman is close to Salt at one or two points, or rather he might have added Salt's details into his questions to Dayan. Having noted that the latter equates system of suture and point-of-view cutting, Rothman further narrows the field of debate by considering Dayan to be essentially referring to a very strictly defined point-of-view shot succession (Melanie Daniels in *The Birds* is shown looking out of the boat to something we cannot see, the next shot shows us the view across Bodega Bay, what she is looking at), apparently excluding, for example, typical shot/reverse-shot dialogue sequences. His major criticism is then that the point-of-view shot is part not of a two-shot but of a three-shot figure, this 'specifically reversing the Oudart/Dayan scenario':

'It is not that the viewer discovers the frame of the shot looking out across Bodega Bay, (unaccountably) infers a sovereign "absent-one" and falls prey to a tyrannical system which makes him take Melanie, shown in the reverse shot, to be that absent-one. Rather, following upon the first shot of the sequence with its conventional cue that asserts its frame, the viewer perceives Melanie's absence from the next frame. Perception of this specific absence is a condition of the viewer's reading of it as a shot from her point of view. This reading is confirmed by the third shot of the sequence, with its return to Melanie.'²⁸

Moreover, extended series of telescoped point-of-view sequences can be constructed, the third shot in one sequence doubling as the initial shot of a second and so on.

The emphases made by Rothman are important but their effect is not to render the concept of suture – of the suturing operation of cinematic discourse – no longer pertinent; rather, they suggest a necessary displacement, the need to move away from the simple notion of the immediate image, the symbolic apprehension, the imaginary resolution, the constant and single figure of the absent one. What is in question in both Dayan and Rothman is the organisation and hold of the look and looks in film: the film goes before me, sees me (I am its address), and I can never look from where it sees me except insofar as it takes me up as the term of its shifting relation, as the term of its passage (it moves

28. 'Against the System of the Suture', p 455.

through me, the turn of its representation) and its point (it moves for me, the fiction of its unity) – a balance in which I am in together the symbolic and the imaginary, production and product. The system of the suture as described by Oudart/Dayan begins to pose the problem of this taking up but does so in a way which issues in a too readily monolithic conception – the absent one, the concentration on shot to reverse-shot point-of-view cutting – that tends to ignore the multiple layerings and times and advances, the suturing function in that multiplicity. 167

Take Chantal Akerman's *News from Home*: the city, images of New York, and the novelistic, by letters, a mother in Brussels writing to her far-off daughter, little incidents and appeals (always how much she is missed: 'ma petite fille, tu nous manques tellement'), read, whispered, quoted on the sound-track, over or under the noises of traffic or subway. No character, no fictioning look to be seen; the shots succeed with no other tie than the fact of that succession, until the last shot from a boat drawing away from New York, the city gradually lost in the image to the expanse of the sea, the film ending as it vanishes on the horizon. Following the Oudart/Dayan scenario, there is then no suture: the look is not appropriated into the imaginary field of the film, the absent one is not resolved; the film has no shot/reverse-shot sequence, no figuration of the images, nothing but their continual replacement. Yet the spectator is included and moved in the film, in a structure and a rhythm of lack and absence (which are not the same thing). What is the direction of these images for this voice and its story, of this voice and its story for these images? The final shot can retrospectively produce the images as those of the daughter but the film remains in its time in the lack of each image, signifier whose representation – 'a signifier represents a subject for another signifier' – is broken, unaccomplished: effect of the relation apart of voice and seen (it is to be noted that the descriptions of the system of the suture say nothing of the importance of the ties between image and sound tracks), of the duration of the shots (the system of the suture in fact depends heavily on a relative constancy and brevity of the passage from shot to shot, on the eviction of any margin of the image in time), of the play within that duration on the flatness or the framing or the division of the image, a process of finding – not starting from, as in the Oudart/Dayan account – a certain multiplicity (the shot in the subway across to the platform on the far side: people waiting and moving alter perception of space and depth, point to the different frames provided by a series of pillars, with trains coming and going until, finally, a train arrives at the nearest platform and abruptly redefines appreciation of spatial disposition), of the non-emergence of any pattern of a look (other than as missing in the film, stressed by the shot in the subway train when

68 people begin to question the look of the camera and the site of our gaze, implicating us in the failure of a binding fiction that would assume and make a sense of the images given). We are placed in the film but that place is not secured, is shifted, and turns, in the meanings the film makes in that insecurity, in those dislocations, on the construction of a central absence – the absence of the daughter, differently posited on image and sound tracks. From that absence, the film refuses to suture, to convert Other to Absent One (such a conversion near to the position of the mother in her letters), hence to resolve as the sign of something for someone, to fix a unity – ‘a sign represents something for someone’. Or rather, it refinds suture effectively as a term of the logic of the signifier, poses the problem of the relations of the subject in the symbolic and the holding of those relations in the imaginary; in which problem lies the real of the film, that of feminism, and of film, that of image, voice, noise, duration, rhythm, the impossible question of a woman’s desire in all that.

As Miller aims at a logic of the signifier, so Oudart aims at a logic of the cinematic, of cinema articulated as discourse. Oudart cannot but come after Miller: the spectator of a film is always already in the symbolic, on the stage of the two fundamental operations, in a production of suture: he or she solicits the image as much as it him or her, there is no initial outside of the symbolic at the cinema, in cinema, no immediate coming in the image which is always instituted as such, image for, a film image. *News from Home* produces a displacement of established junctions of symbolic and imaginary, of the terms of identification – and that is its ‘immediacy’.

What one has are films, discursive organisations, implications of spectating (the last formulation in order to avoid ‘a spectator’ with its idea of a necessary unity, to stress the activity of looking . . . and hearing). It is possible and crucial to describe the limits, constraints, effects of the machine cinema, pose, for example, its reality as ‘imaginary signifier’, but a logic of the cinematic in the sense of the articulation of cinema as discourse is at once a logic of the cinematographic, the form of a particular mode of the organisation of signification, such as the Oudart/Dayan system of the suture. To say that the system of the suture is a particular logic, a writing, is not, however, to say that cinema could be articulated as discourse outside of any suture. Which is to return to the difficulties of the concept and of its translation from Miller to Oudart. At one extreme, suture then becomes a term for any continuity join, for the matches of classical editing; thus Bonitzer can write: ‘The door is a nodal object of classic narrative cinema . . . what Bazin called “door-knob cinema”; a usable object in that it allows transition from one shot to another, point

of suture of the syntagmatic ceasura. . . .'²⁹ Less simply, and 69
 more generally, it is equated with the system based on shot/
 reverse-shot patterns of 'filling in' across and for the spectator
 from image to image; hence Oudart's assertion that *Au hasard*,
Balthazar does not suture. What was emphasised above in con-
 nection with *News from Home*, however, was not that the film
 did not suture but that it did not suture in the way of the
 system, that it posed differently – indeed posed the problem of –
 the functioning of suture, the junction of symbolic and imaginary
 (which is what is in question with the concept of suture). No
discourse without suture (as described by Miller, element of a
 general logic of the signifier) but, equally, no suture which is not
from the beginning specifically defined within a particular system
which gives it form (the effective lesson of Oudart's description
 of cinematic as cinematographic); and which is not, moreover,
 directly political to the extent of its relation of the subject in
 specific positions of unity and meaning – the very demonstration
 of *News from Home*, the recognition of Miller's momentary
 reference to 'a subject, therefore, defined by attributes whose
 other side is political. . . .'

III

'Whose other side is political. . . .'³⁰ From that other side, as it
 were, psychoanalysis has been increasingly called upon as having
 a specific and necessary contribution to make to a materialist
 understanding of the operation of the ideological in its relations
 of subject positions of meaning. Thus, for example, Pierre Ray-
 mond in his *Matérialisme dialectique et logique*: 'A number of
 philosophers insist on the relationship between linguistic systems
 and the unconscious. This relationship is of particular interest to
 marxists who see that language and unconscious have in common
 with ideologies the staging of the subject. Which does not mean
 that the relationship is easy to establish. . . .'³¹ Or again, Michel
 Pêcheux in *Les Vérités de La Palice*, a book which attempts to
 suggest something of the bases for a theory of discourse within
 an Althusserian perspective: 'There is no hiding with stock
 formulations the heavy absence of a conceptual articulation
 elaborated between ideology and unconscious.'³²

It is discourse-for-Pêcheux which makes the heavy absence felt,

29. *Le regard et la voix*, p 105.

30. This section is taken from part of a paper given in May/June 1977
 to a seminar organised by Paul Q Hirst and Sami Zubaida at Birkbeck
 College, London. One or two emphases only can be made here, and
 solely towards further general presentation of the context of the concept
 of suture.

31. P Raymond, *Matérialisme dialectique et logique*, Paris 1977, p 57n.

32. M Pêcheux, *Les Vérités de La Palice*, Paris 1975, p 136.

70 gives the area where the articulation must be developed. Against an integrally linguistic conception, he wishes to describe discourse with reference to the mechanisms of the setting in position of its subjects, such a description cutting across traditional oppositions of the *langue/parole* variety for which discourse becomes simply the concrete acts of the use by individuals of an abstract language system (it was seen above how psychoanalysis is involved in a similar displacement). The aim, evidently, is to reappropriate the linguistic into the social without denying its specificity and to pose the question of the ideological to language accordingly, to work through the notion of *discursive formation*: 'We shall call *discursive formation* that which in a given ideological formation, that is, from a given position in a given conjuncture determined by the state of the class-struggle, determines "what can and must be said. . . ." This comes down to saying that words, expressions, propositions, etc receive their meaning from the discursive formation in which they are produced . . . individuals are "interpellated" as speaking-subjects (as subjects of *their* discourse) by discursive formations which represent "in language" corresponding ideological formations.'³³ A discursive formation, that is, exists as a component of an ideological formation itself based in particular conditions of production (ideological state apparatuses) and the terms of the discursive formation/ideological formation relation are those of subject and interpellation. Individuals are constituted as subjects through the discursive formation, a process of subjection in which the individual is identified as subject with the discursive formation in a structure of miscognition (the subject thus presented as the source of the meanings of which it is an effect). Interpellation names the mechanism of this structure of miscognition, effectively the term of the subject in the discursive and the ideological, the point of their correspondence: 'We shall not here solve the problem of the nature of this correspondence. Let us merely say that it cannot be a question either of a pure equivalence (ideology = discourse) or of a simple distribution of functions ("discursive practice"/non-discursive practice). It would be better to talk of an "intrication" of the discursive formations in the ideological formations, an intrication whose principle would reside precisely in "interpellation".'³⁴ What Pêcheux wants is then to give this intrication some descriptive substance by providing a non-subjective theory of the constitution of the subject in its situation of enunciator (how does the subject have the meanings it has and how does it have those meanings as subject?).

Interpellation, however, taken over from Althusser's well-known essay on 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'³⁵, raises

33. Ibid, pp 144-5.

34. Ibid, p 145n.

35. L. Althusser, 'Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état', *La Pensée*, June 1970; translated in *Lenin and Philosophy*, London 1971.

serious difficulties that have been demonstrated at length by Paul Q Hirst and that centre, for present purposes, on the way in which the recognition demanded by the mechanism of interpellation would presuppose the subject the mechanism is said to constitute: 'Recognition, the crucial moment of the constitution (activation) of the subject, presupposes a point of cognition prior to the recognition. Something must recognise that which it is to be. . . . The social function of ideology is to constitute concrete individuals (not-yet-subjects) as subjects. The concrete individual is "abstract", it is not yet the subject it will be. It is, however, *already* a subject in the sense of the subject which supports the process of recognition. Thus something which is not a subject must already have the faculties necessary to support the *recognition* which will constitute it as a subject. It must have a *cognitive* capacity as a prior condition of its place in the process of recognition. Hence the necessity of the distinction of the concrete individual and the concrete subject, a distinction in which the faculties of the latter are supposed already in the former (unless of course cognition be considered a "natural" human faculty).'³⁶ The criticism is correct insofar as it indicates that interpellation can in no way be the key either to ideology or to subjectivity (the fact of the individual as subject), the two being held as interdependent. One solution then proposed – cursorily taken up by Althusser in the use of the individual/subject distinction and the vague emergence of a reference to Lacan at points in his essay – is to separate out a number of instances in the construction-constitution of a subject, with psychoanalysis the available account of one of these specific areas: (subject-) *support*, biological individuality of individuals as material base from which they are brought to function in social relations; *ideological subject*, place in the operation of discursive/ideological formations, constitutive of these, assuring the entry of (subject-) supports into the different social processes; *psychoanalytic subject*, position in the relations of the signifier, produced in the (subject-) support, effect of its structuration by the signifying chain.³⁷ Psychoanalysis thus becomes, within historical materialism, the description of the constitution of the individual (subject-) support as a subject for interpellation in discursive formations as ideological subject; which is a role that psychoanalysis can often seem ready to accommodate, posed as the truth of the individual subject, abstract from social process, ideological formation – the political over on the other side.

Yet it is quite the contrary that should be the case. Exactly

36. Paul Q Hirst, 'Althusser's theory of ideology', *Economics and Society* v 5 n 4, November 1976, pp 404-5.

37. Cf M Tort, 'La psychanalyse dans le matérialisme historique', *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* n 1, Spring 1970, p 154.

72 | inasmuch as psychoanalysis is directed against any idea of there being a set of contents of the unconscious, makes of the unconscious a term of subject-division in the signifier, an action in the speaking-being, so it is involved, always and immediately, in the social relations of language as discourse (and not in absolutes, archetypes, essential meanings or whatever). In this respect, Lacan's teaching has a double edge, leads two ways: on the one hand, nothing but discourse, discourse then taken as sole province of 'the truth', the analyst (Lacan, lone bearer of a word 'without equal') its Master (criticism of certain tendencies in feminist thinking, for example, is constantly produced in terms effectively of the assertion of this position: 'women do not know what they are saying, which is all the difference between them and me' SXX, 68); on the other, nothing but discourse, hence no trans-historical finality of truth, hence the possibility of a radical practice and transformation of the whole history of the subject. The same kind of double-edgedness can be traced at many points in psychoanalysis: the analytic situation itself, for instance, which is at once the provision of an operative space for the apprehension of the series of fantasies in which the analysand's history of the subject is held, the resolution of that hold in transference, and the establishment of the position of the analyst's mastery with the rituals of a professional class, a certain balance of power of discourse confirmed and certified by Institute or School (locus of the habitually unanalysed transference of the analyst); or again, the notion of interminability in analysis, giving both the stress on the production of the subject in language, against any final or original truth, and something of a potential imaginary of analysis, a confirming concept of its maintenance away from the other side, closed to social process and any question of the transformation - 'termination' - of the subject in its history there. Psychoanalysis is thus available for the call that is made upon it, but not simply; and the difficulties emerge, continuing to emerge with the separation-of-the-subject-into-instances solution, as those of an articulation, Pêcheux's 'articulation elaborated between ideology and unconscious', which is perhaps itself too rigid and fixed a conception for what is at stake.

For Pêcheux, interpellation goes in conjunction with identification, that conjunction, of course, representing part of his appeal to the psychoanalytic: 'the interpellation of the individual as subject of its discourse is effected by the identification of the subject with the discursive formation that dominates it'.³⁸ Quoting from Althusser, Pêcheux offers the following summary of his articulation of ideology and unconscious:

' " The individual is interpellated as (free) subject in order that it freely submit to the commandments of the Subject, in order that

38. *Les Vérités de La Palice*, p 148.

it (freely) accept its subjection." If one adds, first, that this subject with a capital S – absolute and universal subject – is precisely what Lacan designates as the Other with a capital O and, second, that, still according to Lacan, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other", one can see how unconscious repression and ideological subjection, while not the same, are materially linked in what may be called the process of the signifier in interpellation and identification. . . .³⁹

In fact, that summary only states the problem (and Pêcheux's own problems: with interpellation, with the material link between repression and subjection), in connection with which it is perhaps worth setting out one or two simple theses to clarify something of the intermesh of terms such as ideology, imaginary, symbolic, unconscious: (1) the ideological is not reducible to the imaginary (which is part of the difficulty of the account of interpellation in the 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' paper, as again in Pêcheux); the ideological always involves a relation of symbolic and imaginary (the imaginary is a specific fiction of the subject in the symbolic); (2) the symbolic is not reducible to the ideological; there is no ideological operation which does not involve a symbolic construction, a production of the subject in meaning, but the symbolic is always more than the effect of such operations (language is not exhausted by the ideological); (3) the symbolic is never simply not ideological; psychoanalysis, and this is its force, has never encountered some pure symbolic, is always engaged with a specific history of the subject (language is not exhausted by the ideological but is never met other than as discourse, within a discursive formation productive of subject relations in ideology); (4) the unconscious is not reducible to the ideological; it is a division of the subject with the Other, a history of the subject on which the ideological constantly turns but which it in no way resumes. In short, a materialist theory of the constitution-construction of the subject cannot be developed in abstraction from the discursive and the ideological but, equally, cannot be developed as an account of interpellation which effectively takes the subject as given and not in effect of the signifier. The mesh of the various instances, tightening together, is difficult and crucial; suture could well be defined as the term of that crucial difficulty.

In this respect, moreover, it is necessary to remember that the very concept of the subject itself derives from a secondary and linguistic perspective and tends constantly towards the imaginary (as in Althusser who reproduces the subject as a kind of essence of ideology). What 'subject' designates is not a unity, not even a unity of division, but a construction and a process, a hétéro-

39. Ibid, pp 122-3.

74, geneity, an intersection. Lacan's version of the causation of the subject and the very introduction of suture are indicative here: the subject is minus one, the real of castration; plus one, the resolution of that real in the imaginary; a movement in the symbolic — 'gaping, flickering, alternating suction'. Suture names the relation of the subject in the symbolic which is its join in the chain, its representation from signifier to signifier ('a signifier represents a subject for another signifier') and its identification as one in the fiction of the sign ('a sign represents something for someone'). The division-separation causation of the subject describes this process, the subject always returning in its implication in the desire of the Other — 'what does it want?' and 'who wants?': questions in which the subject always fails (comes back to the fact of its process, its division) and is always found again (its separation, its procuration from that division), taken up immediately in meanings and their production in discursive formations. A theory of ideology must then begin not from the subject but as an account of suturing effects, the effecting of the join of the subject in structures of meaning; which account would thus involve an attention to the whole history of the subject, the interminable movement of that history, and not its simple equation with ideology.

IV

The realisation of cinema as discourse is the production at every moment through the film of a subject-address, the specification of the play of incompleteness-completion. That emphasis, given above, must be maintained, but also extended a little. A film operates with a number of matters of expression, a variety of codes, both cinematic and non-cinematic; meaning is not just constructed 'in' the particular film, meanings circulate between social formation, spectator and film; a film is a series of acts of meaning, the spectator is there in a multiplicity of times. In this connection, one might distinguish in the relation of the spectator as subject in the film preconstruction, construction (or reconstruction) and passage. Preconstruction involves the ready-made positions of meaning that a film may adopt, not merely large categories of definition, political arguments, thematic boundaries, and so on, but equally, for example, the signs and orders of language itself, the existing social conventions of colour, the available ideas of film (genre is a major factor of preconstruction). Construction is the totalising of a more or less coherent subject position in the film as its end, its direction, the overall fiction of the subject related. Passage is the performance of the film, the movement of the spectator making the film, taken up as subject. The ideological achievement of any film is not merely in one or the other of these

instances, it is first and foremost in its hold of the three: the appropriation of preconstruction in reconstruction (the film's construction effectively reconstructs from its different materials) and the process of that appropriation. The term of that hold in the classic fiction feature film is narrativisation, the constant conversion to narrative, catching up the spectator as subject in the image of the narrative and in the film as its narration. The system of the suture described by Oudart/Dayan is one of the modes of this narrativisation (others, also suturing, still need to be examined, notably those working between image and sound tracks).

Very rarely do we say that a film is 'contemporary', unless, remaining within the area of preconstruction, by reference to the 'urgency' of its theme. It is, however, fairly common for a film to be characterised as 'dated', with the reference here being to the signs of the representation *recognised as such*, to a certain loss in the fine balance of enunciation and enounced which is contained as historical in the crude sense of 'their past' versus 'our present', the particular film then declared 'interesting' and/or 'amusing' for the spectator today (this is especially evident with television's presentation-consumption of films). The non-'dated' film is thus *close*, its discursive ordering pulling the images towards unity for *us*, its activity of meaning transposed into the coherence of a nearness: we enter the structure of address, join the film: the spectator is recast as the subject of the film's relations of the symbolic and the imaginary together, its suturing. Which, moreover, is very much a question of time: there are multiple times between spectator and film (Oudart's accounts of the experience of film images can perhaps best be read in this stress) but the film, classically, is always brought into time with its significant flow, its balance, its narrativisation; producing thereby its essential contemporariness – constantly with you for you, moving you with it in its narrative image.

Lacan talks of the 'in some sort *pulsatory* function of the unconscious': 'whatever, an instant, appears in its opening is seemingly destined . . . to disappear again' (SXI, 44). Behind that formulation lies the idea of the *defile* of consciousness developed by Freud in the *Studies on Hysteria*, published in 1895. Freud writes of a kind of narrow passage (*Engpass*) or narrow cleft (*enge Spalte*) 'in front of the patient's consciousness', an aperture in which memories appear during analytic treatment in a stop-go movement; the problem being the lack of regularity in the movement, the passage continually blocked by this or that memory, like 'a picture that refuses to disappear': 'There is some justification for speaking of the "defile" of consciousness. . . . Only a single memory at a time can enter ego-consciousness. A patient who is occupied in working through such a memory sees nothing of what is pushing after it and forgets what has

76 already pushed its way through. If there are difficulties in the way of mastering this single pathogenic memory – as, for instance, if the patient does not relax his resistance against it, if he tries to repress or mutilate it – then the defile is, so to speak, blocked. The work is at a standstill, nothing more can appear, and the single memory which is in process of breaking through remains in front of the patient until he has taken it up into the breadth of his ego. The whole spatially extended mass of psychogenic material is in this way drawn through a narrow cleft and thus arrives in consciousness cut up, as it were, into pieces or strips. It is the psychotherapist's business to put these together once more into the organisation which he presumes to have existed.⁴⁰ It is as though, at the very moment of its birth, Freud is describing the cinematic apparatus, with the difference that that apparatus is constructed to ensure the constancy of the flow of images, a unity of presentation, a stable memory.

Which last brings us back to narrativisation: the economy of the film's flow in a binding coherence, its remembering, the realisation of a single forward time within which multiple times can be given play and held. The system of suture, be it noted, breaks as soon as the time of the shot hesitates beyond the time of its narrative specifications (demonstrated throughout Benoît Jacquot's *L'Assassin musicien*).

The subject of a film is the play between its multiple elements, including the social formation in which it finds its existence, and the spectator; no film which does not grasp the spectator in terms of that heterogeneity, which does not shift the spectator in ties, joins, relations, movements of the symbolic and the imaginary, with the real a constant and impossible limit (impossible for the film, involving a transformation that would have to include the film). A film may also – will also? – project a subject, some unity of the play produced; most constrainingly, a narrative image. Suture, finally, names the dual process of multiplication and projection, the conjunction of the spectator as subject with the film – which conjunction is always the terrain of any specific ideological operation of a film.

These have been notes on and around suture. As such, they have no particular conclusion other than the acknowledgement of the concepts that now need to be examined in this connection with film: *identification, repetition, resistance, the history of the subject*.

40. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* Vol II, pp 291, 296.

Film: 'History/Production/Memory'

Mark Nash and Steve Neale

This year's special event at the Edinburgh Film Festival, 'History/Production/Memory', was conceived as an attempt to rethink what is meant by an 'intervention' in 'film culture' at the present time. The event concerned itself with an examination of notions such as 'the state', 'independence', 'institution', and 'avant-garde practice' in an attempt to focus these notions not just within theory *per se* but specifically in relation to political, economic and ideological instances in the conjuncture. The contexts chosen around which to focus this examination were: state sponsorship in Britain in the 1930s (with screenings of various short films); the period of socialist transition in the Soviet Union in the 1920s (in relation to a retrospective of the films of Dziga Vertov); the dominant mode of 'commercial' film production in Britain in the 1940s (with screenings of films from Ealing Studios); and film and television production post 1968 in relation to the 'popular memory' debate foregrounded by *Cahiers du Cinéma* (I. Pierre Rivière, *Civil Wars in France*, *Days of Hope*).

Three possible articulations of the terms 'history' and 'cinema' can serve to indicate the areas that the event sought to focus. These are: 'history of cinema', 'history in cinema', and 'cinema in history'. Perhaps what emerged most forcefully from the discussion was less the confusions and problems specific to any single one of the three articulations than those which arose from the need both to differentiate them and at the same time to hold them together in their various inter-relations.

Underlying the event there was a polemical insistence that history, over and against various forms of empiricism, is neither the past as such, nor yet a discourse in which the past is revealed, but rather a set of discourses in which the past is constructed, and constructed not simply from 'the past' itself, but from the various discourses that the past has thrown up and that have been accumulated in various forms of 'archive', to use that term in the sense given to it by Michel Foucault. In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London, Tavistock 1972, p 129) Foucault writes:

'The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement [*énoncé*], and preserves, for future memories, its statement as an escapee; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of its enunciability*. Nor is the

78 archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection; it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is *the system of its functioning*.'

What is stored in the archive (using the term here in its more traditional sense as well as in Foucault's) is governed by socially specific criteria. Access to it is restricted in socially determinate ways. And the discourses known as history are produced within specific social institutions. History, therefore, is not only an order of discourse, a discipline, but also an apparatus of power.

To say that history is a particular discursive institution is not yet enough, however, to allow a complete re-posing of the set of problems the event set out to examine. Symptomatically the term 'history', or at least its adverbial and adjectival modalities, constantly returned, even – and perhaps especially – in the articles and presentations which sought to pose most sharply the radical nature of the reconceptualisation that the event aimed to focus. Thus John Ellis, writing in the *Edinburgh '77 Magazine* (p 59):

'... such an institution as cinema, occupying a still not inconsiderable social role, should have both a space within the social formation (a space whose definition *varies historically* [our italics]) and an internal organisation that determines its activity within the social formation.'

Or Stephen Heath, in a presentation:

'We know that the reading of a film is neither constrained absolutely nor free absolutely, but *historical* [again our emphasis].

What the terms 'historically' and 'historical' seem to be doing here is specifying certain practices on the one hand as *social* and on the other hand as subject to change, both in the sense of being in process and in the sense that their existence as practices, and the modalities of that existence, together with the nature of the changes they undergo and the processes they are caught in, are dependent upon determinations and productive of effects that vary in time. 'History' here, therefore, is less an order of discourse than a term serving to indicate social temporality – and a term that it seems necessary, at the moment, to retain. Purely temporal categories – the 'past', the 'present' etc – miss the force of the *social* that 'history' is there to mark.

The other term in the three articulations, 'cinema', was proposed as a concept specifying a set of signifying practices as constitutive of an ideological institution. 'Institution' here means not, or not simply, a particular locus of practice, but rather what Metz and Heath have referred to as a 'machine' for the production of ideological meanings and positions, for regulating and contain-

ing subjectivity. In fact, the term 'machine' may well be preferable, since both cinematic and non-cinematic institutions (using the term in its usual, existing sense) also need to be specified in relation to the cinematic machine as a whole (and therefore crossing institutional boundaries) during specific conjunctures. In other words, there needs to be a differentiation of terminology through which to point to: on the one hand, regularised loci of practices within specific fields, both inside and outside cinema (these practices, even within ideological institutions, are not confined to the production of ideology as such, but also involve politics and economics); and, on the other hand, orders of the production of ideological meaning and position as located in relation to systems of signifying practice. The use of 'machine', however, in the singular, tends to suggest a homogeneity that does not exist, and never has done. While it stresses, correctly, the constant processes of binding and suture, it on the other hand underplays the variety and heterogeneity of different practices (and different forms of suture) at any one point in time and the contradictions that necessarily exist within and between them. In the 1930s in Britain, for instance, as Claire Johnston pointed out in her paper, a variety of practices were operative, ranging from the production of feature films, to the production of documentaries (both state and non-state funded), to the 'amateur' newsreels of the labour movement, to the 'experimental' work of Len Lye, not to mention the exhibition of various forms of American and European film. There was no single overall modality of address binding these forms and practices together across the whole field of cinema, or across the whole social formation. Rather there were specific regulations of address, specific classifications of practice and audience, that served to separate and differentiate each practice from the others and to produce a coherence, a mode of regulation, within them. (Consider here the examples of the various experimental films produced under the auspices of the GPO Film Unit and shown to audiences such as the Film Society, or the Workers Newsreels with an 'amateur' aesthetic – no coherent POV, no coherent strategy of address in the sequencing of images – shown at socialist meetings, and so on.) This is to say that the processes of suture do not operate in the same manner across all manifestations of film. Rather, therefore, than locate each of the practices involved in terms of a single mode of subjectivity, it is important to specify the different orders of subjectivity inscribed in relation to each practice.

The term cinematic 'machine' would then refer less to a single englobing operation, than to the plurality of channels, demarcated spaces and orders of regularity that occur across the instances of practice, text and subject, to the way in which practices, texts and subjects are constantly bound into regularised spaces and modalities of production and consumption, and to a plurality of

80 regulations of subjectivity distributed across, and constitutive of, a variety of audiences. Meanwhile, over and above this plurality, the dominance of certain practices would also have to be stressed, since it is the relation of dominance which provides the terms within which differentiation largely takes place. Thus the dominance of Hollywood can be situated, as it was by Claire Johnston, in terms of a coupling with logocentrism (ie, a privileging of the voice, a marking of the presence of the speaking subject), which, in the 1930s, can be seen as relating both to the notion of the full subject requiring artistic freedom (as epitomised in Griersonian documentary) or the collective subject as a class speaking with its own voice (as in some workers newsreels). It is however also important to specify more exactly the differentiations thus produced, since it is in this way that one can define – or come to an understanding of the possibilities of defining – crucial points of stress and contradiction and thus of potential transformation. The rest of this article will seek to concretise some of the questions raised by the three articulations of ‘history’ and ‘cinema’ mentioned above, first singly and in their own right and then in relation to the Straub/Huillet film, *Fortini/Cani*.

HISTORY OF CINEMA In a forum given by members of the editorial groups of *Cahiers* and *Ça* Serge Daney attributed the interest in ‘popular memory’ after 1968 to a leftist polemic against the French Communist Party’s ‘monopoly of the history of the working class’, and its refusal to acknowledge the individual experiences of leftists, what the left had been doing, and so on.

This period also saw the publication of Comolli’s articles on deep focus in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. These articles set out to problematise any simple notion of ‘the history of the cinema’, and to interrogate the epistemological bases of traditional histories. They were clearly a part of the post-68 interest in history as well as being specifically related to the then current work of Louis Althusser. The institutional and theoretical space in which history has developed and been debated in Britain is very different: the Communist Party in this country has never had a degree of influence comparable to that of the French Party, and the development of ‘working-class’ history in Britain has largely involved the documentation of groups marginalised in traditional historical discourses. This has influenced the kind of work developed around it, which has been very generalised and also distant from institutionalised political forces.

The most rigorous and challenging work has been produced by Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess, who, most explicitly in the last chapter of *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, have attacked the whole notion of history and, as a corollary, the whole set of practices involved in its production. Since they state that any form of ‘regional’ history is merely and necessarily a particular

mode of history in general, their position involves the rejection 81
of any work constituting itself, or capable of being constituted as
'history of cinema'.

In focussing issues around history in this way, their work performed a role at Edinburgh analogous to that performed by Althusser in relation to the work of Comolli and *Cahiers*. However, while it correctly involves a break with empiricism and teleology, insisting that history is a work on representations rather than a work on the past as such, that insistence is coincident with a rejection of history which does not necessarily follow from such a break, but which can rather be seen as a product of the space it occupies in relation to the tradition it is reacting to, a space limited both by the poverty of that tradition and by the absence of any effective political forces with which to link itself, and which has very limiting consequences. It involves, firstly, the cutting off of theoretical work that could lead to a specifying of the problems referred to above concerning terms like 'historical' and 'historically'; secondly, a denial of the possibility of alternative forms of historical discourse, forms involving different articulations of representations produced in the past; and, thirdly, a rejection of political struggles around the archive. Such struggles, and the problems to which they are a response, are very real ones, and precisely because history is not the past but a matter of production in and for the present. Access to materials can be a crucial matter for ideological struggle, as well as for the theoretical work which may also be involved.

For instance an immediate problem for Edinburgh and the Vertov retrospective was the lack of availability of material relating to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and indeed the unavailability for prior viewing of many of Vertov's own films. As a result there was no way of relating the theoretical work on *Man with a Movie Camera* either to the other films in the retrospective or to the conjunctural specificities of the initial production, distribution and exhibition affecting the films concerned. This is not a problem produced by a project of attempting to discover the 'real meaning' of Vertov's films by returning them to their historical origins, but rather the reverse – a problem of attempting to avoid reading back into the past a meaning produced in the present, and a problem that derives from the inability to locate historically certain differences of meaning, reading, audience and address and hence the reasons for the continuing hypostasisation of *Man with a Movie Camera* and its author.

What is raised here, and requires careful consideration, is the status of the production of historical accounts of cinema, or of aspects of the cinema, as interventions. What has to be stressed is, firstly, that the production of histories involves the production, modification and use of concepts and theories in and for the present, and, secondly and relatedly, that interventions in the form

82 of such histories are as much interventions into current discourses and the institutions that support them as they are into immediate political struggles – that it is not simply a matter of producing ‘lessons for the present’. There is always a mediation of the directly political issues. Firstly, ‘the past’ is never the same as ‘the present’. Situations change, are historically different. There is thus never a question of simply ‘learning from the past’. Furthermore, concepts and theories are as much at stake as ‘plans for action’ or whatever. The investigation of the past may be validly motivated by theoretical problems – problems which certainly and necessarily have political implications, but which, none the less, may not be immediately productive of strategies or guidelines for action. Thus the work on the 1930s presented by Claire Johnston and Annette Kuhn is as important for the problems it raises concerning conceptualisations of the State and of film-making practices in their articulation with both state and non-state institutions during a specific conjuncture as it is for immediate insertion into specific debates on current conceptualisation of such institutions within various sectors of independent film-making in this country at the present time and as a political intervention into the ideological assumptions of film-makers against their attempts to falsely make direct links between past and present. Equally it could be said that work on the 1920s in Europe, though perhaps of less immediately obvious importance for these debates, is of potential importance for the conceptualisation of the various practices involved currently in ‘independent cinema’ in that it would focus the moment at which practices began to be fully and rigidly differentiated, separated, classified and institutionalised as ‘entertainment’, as ‘art’ and as ‘avant-garde’. The examination of the conditions for such differentiations would begin to produce concepts not only for the understanding of various forms of ‘independence’ in cinema, but also for specifying more clearly and substantially the differentiations and articulations, the struggles and contradictions, crossing and constituting the ‘cinematic institution’. This kind of work is of great importance, and its importance lies as much in producing theoretical concepts (since part of its value derives from stressing the *differences* between past conjunctures and the present, from stressing history, in its sense as sociality in process) as in producing representations of the past.

HISTORY IN CINEMA The topic of ‘history in cinema’ at Edinburgh largely concerned the issue of textual forms in relation to the production of ideological positions for the spectator such that the question of the historicity of the representations involved in the production of such positions and of the ways in which representations can be articulated as historical – of the ways, therefore, in which a subject can be inscribed into a text as historical – were

brought to the fore. Discussion here focussed largely on Allio's 83
I, Pierre Rivière and the *Days of Hope* series.

Stephen Heath's presentation pointed to a crucial issue here as being one of considering 'historical films' as always involving not just 'history', but also film and cinema, as always being concerned, therefore, not just with 'history in cinema' but also with 'history of cinema'. One of the basic problems of the film *I, Pierre Rivière* was the way it took a set of discourses and articulated them according to the dominant mode of the production of historical films: its problem, in a sense, was that it did not take account of its own location as a mode of discourse in relation to the history of modes of articulating history in film. The result was firstly that film and viewer were locked in a fantasy of the document, as that which reveals the past, and secondly, that that past was produced as present, present for the viewer – a production of subject, text and past as an identity. What is posed here is the possibility of the production of an 'historical film' which disengages and dislocates the three terms of that identity, which addresses itself therefore to a non-coincident set of histories: that of 'the past', that of cinematic texts, and that of the subject, this latter through its location as in process in a contradictory, fissured, non-homogeneous present.

Days of Hope raises the same kind of issues, but it also poses a problem for the conceptualisation and specification of what is meant by the term 'subject', since it attempts to inscribe its subject as a class subject:

'Where *Days of Hope* differs from the majority of ideologically conventional films is that [its] subject is posed as collective. Our identification with Ben is marked primarily in terms of his class-membership; his truth (his view) is not individual but collective. *Days of Hope* positions a class as viewer, as subject' (Colin MacCabe, *Edinburgh '77 Magazine*, p 15).

The problem with this, MacCabe, argues, is that: 'A class . . . is not a subject, an identity, but rather the ever-changing configuration produced by the forces and relations of production' (ibid, p 13). However, leaving aside the specific issue of *Days of Hope*, the equation of subject and identity here contrasts with the psychoanalytic conception (which relates, ambiguously, but nonetheless forcefully and fundamentally, to the *individual* as subject), where the subject is precisely a *non*-identity, is heterogeneous. The issues are very complex, but they relate, basically, to the whole problem of the relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis, and the way in which psychoanalysis has been inserted into theoretical work on ideology. The theorisation of the modalities of the subject in discourse has proceeded through concepts derived from psychoanalysis – necessarily so since psychoanalysis was the only theoretical area in which human subjectivity was posed as

84 a heterogeneity-in-process. However, this has meant that the concepts used have been, to date, bound by psychoanalysis – ie, they have been thought solely in terms of individuality in relation to family structures. Moreover this limitation has been compounded by the nature of the work undertaken in textual analyses.¹ The problem is one of producing analyses of discourse which can theorise human subjectivity in its psychic relations and structures across ideological representations of ‘the social’ – across, therefore, ideological representations of the political and the economic; of producing descriptions of subject positions in discourse as they relate to politics and economics. Such theorisations and descriptions can only be produced by work which attempts the analysis of texts in conjunctural – ie, historical – terms, particularly since the issue of class and class identification, which is a vital part of such work, is precisely a conjunctural issue.

We can return here to *Days of Hope* and the problem of class identity as posed by MacCabe. To quote him more fully:

‘A class is not a subject, an identity, but rather the ever-changing configuration produced by the forces and relations of production. A set of economic, political and ideological forces constantly constitutes classes in struggle and classes can find no definition outside those struggles’ (op cit, p 13).

Thus, while classes have no given identity in general, identities are produced in particular conjunctures through the production of political and ideological representations – although such ‘identities’, it should again be stressed, are in no sense derived from, motivated by, ‘read off from’, any ‘real’ identity existing at the economic level. The problem here, we would argue, concerns less ‘class’ or ‘subject’ as such, than ‘identity’ in relation to both. *Days of Hope* produces the viewing subject as an identity, in homogeneous identification with a class whose discursive representation similarly constitutes it as an identity. The consequence of this for the articulation of history is that both viewing subject and class are produced as, in a sense, non-historical, outside of conjunctural specification, differentiation and contradiction. These problems are precisely a result of the discursive strategies adopted by the *Days of Hope* series. ‘Modernised’ classical realist forms, of the kind the *Days of Hope* films represent, cannot but produce history, class and subject in this way, since their constructions inevitably produce, not difference, absence, contradiction and process, but presence and identity.

1. Psychoanalysis here has met its mirror image; the individual subject outside specific and historical social determination and construction is analysed in relation to an individual text, similarly outside specific and historical social determination and construction.

CINEMA IN HISTORY Many of the problems concerning cinema in history are essentially those already pointed to in section one on the analysis of cinema in specific conjunctures whose field is the social formation as a whole rather than simply the 'cinematic institution' as such, and those in section two on the production and analysis of forms of address as forms of social address, again in relation to particular conjunctures in specific social formations. Rather than simply repeat or amplify a number of remarks made already in relation to these problems, it is worth posing here two issues, one of which emerged fairly explicitly at Edinburgh, the other of which did not but is nonetheless fundamentally important to the concerns that Edinburgh focussed. The first is the issue of theoretical discussion of the political; the second concerns concepts of class and class struggle, though in a slightly different way to the problems indicated above in relation to *Days of Hope*. 85

Problems around discussion of the political arose largely in the context of debates on television, particularly in relation to possible interventions in the Television Festival, where the spontaneous vocabulary adopted was largely that of conspiracy. It became increasingly evident that work on the conceptualisation of the political in relation to the ideological was urgently needed if any kind of considered and effective intervention in the institutions of television is to be possible. There seem to be two areas of work in which such conceptualisation can begin to be produced. Firstly, there is work in relation to cinema on the kind of conjunctural analyses already pointed to (specifically, perhaps, development of the work already begun on the 30s, where the political is involved both through the State funding of documentaries and through propaganda produced by political parties and groups such as the anti-fascist front) together with work on the relationship between political struggles and texts produced by institutions of entertainment in specific conjunctures. (Purely speculatively, it might be interesting here to analyse the British cinema of the late fifties and early sixties which saw the rise both of Free Cinema and of Hammer in conjunction with a set of interesting ideological and political shifts.) Secondly, an obvious area in need of urgent work is that of television, where relationships between the ideological and the political, in institutional terms and in terms of the production of discursive representations of politics in news and current affairs programmes, are immediately and inescapably present.

Again, as with the problematisation of the concept of history, the question of the specification and analysis of class and class struggle, in relation to the kinds of concerns focussed at Edinburgh, has been actualised by the work of Hindess and Hirst. It demands an investigation of the way, once the base-superstructure model is abandoned, the relations between economic, ideological and political practice can be conceptualised. In theorising these

86 relationships Hindess and Hirst replace the concept of determination with that of conditions of existence. If such a conceptualisation is pursued, and if, as Hindess and Hirst maintain (eg in *Mode of Production and Social Formation*, Macmillan, London 1977), class is an economic category, it means that class struggle, and its specification in relation to cinema and television, can only be analysed in conjunctural terms, since there is no automatic relationship, either of determination or reflection, across any given social formation: its effects can only be specified in relation to specific conjunctures. What the work of Hindess and Hirst effectively insists on, is *not* that practices are autonomous, but precisely the opposite, that they have conditions of existence, and that those conditions, and the forms they take, are not specifiable in general. What this means, or should mean, is that practices must be analysed in relation to each other in conjunctural terms, and that a necessary part of such analysis is the specification of class and class struggle – though, to date, rather the opposite has happened and their work has largely been read as validating, and has been used to validate, positions and analyses which effectively maintain the almost total autonomy of each of the instances of practice. It is important that the effective insistence pointed to above is recognised, and that the kind of work it implies be produced, not least because it may begin to produce analyses of class and class struggle that are not marked by economism and reductionism. Interestingly enough, given Hindess's and Hirst's position on history, such work will necessarily and inevitably be historical.

It is worth concluding these remarks with a point which, although it was not present centrally at the event, is nonetheless an important one, concerning the history of cinema, history in cinema and cinema in history, the point being that, historically, cinema can be seen as being produced precisely in order to produce an ideology of history and of historical evidence, an ideology of history as the visible, in order to shift the terrain of history and its discussion and dissemination at a point when they were becoming 'socially dangerous', ie potentially revolutionary. Two further points arise here. Firstly, the interconnections of the three conjunctions of 'cinema' and 'history' cross at the point of textual address and subject: how do particular texts relate to cinema conceived as an institution for the production of the ideology of history as the visible? Do their textual strategies confirm or challenge that ideology? Secondly, as John Ellis suggests in his paper, this function may have shifted recently onto television, opening up a space for cinema such that the problematisation of representation, and hence the problematisation of that ideology of history may be an immediate possibility in a number of areas of cinematic practice. What this means is that television's role is in need of urgent analysis, since it is a similar role to that played by cinema in the first half of this century, and yet displays signifi-

FORTINI/CANI Straub and Huillet's film *Fortini/Cani*, which was shown at Edinburgh, though not as part of the event, is discussed here because of its importance in relation to nearly all the issues around history and cinema referred to above: class, politics, address, conjuncture, and discourse. Its central textual problematic concerns the relationship between various conjunctures in the past and the present, and history as discourse, and the various forms that may take, as each relates to the individual subject (both Franco Fortini and the viewer). It can be seen as a film which meets the *Ça* group's suggestion for 'a history that would assume the terms of its enunciation . . . a film that recognised its fiction'.

The film carefully produces a differentiation between a series of layers of history and times of enunciation in relation to similarly differentiated modes of discourse, which may be sketched as follows:

Discourse of television and newspapers	Enunciation and enounced: around the Six Day War in 1967
Franco Fortini reading his book, <i>I Cani del Sinai</i>	Enunciation: the present Enounced: 1967 (time of writing and publication of <i>I Cani del Sinai</i>)
Voice over commentary.	Enunciation: the present Enounced: 1967 and the present.
Visual discourse 'accompanying' the commentary	Enunciation and enounced: the present
Handwritten discourse (identified in the script, but not in the film, as that of Fortini)	Enunciation and enounced: the present

In addition, there is the time at which viewing takes place, the performance of the film to/with a viewing subject.

The different registers of discourse (graphic, voice, music, image) support different, sometimes contradictory 'times' of enounced and enunciation, so as to foreground the time and fact of enunciation, and the intersection of different layers of history, different times in the process of the film. This may be illustrated by Fortini's voice-over commentary, remembering both his past and the past of his father in Florence. It ranges over his father's youth, memories of his father, Fortini's youth in the 20s and 30s, encounters with fascism and so on. The time of the enunciation

88 of these memories is the present, its referent different points of personal and political history. This verbal discourse accompanies/ is accompanied by images corresponding to geographical references – for example the Via dei Servi (shot 32) and the monument on the Arno (shot 40) – but images which, in their articulation in, for instance, the length of shot, the lack of detailed correspondence, exceed any illustrative function, leading to an emphasis on the fact and time of enunciation similar to that produced by the shots of Rome in *Othon* and *History Lessons* (a strategy which seems bound up with the use of direct sound).

Another example: the time of the enunciation of Fortini reading from his book is the present, yet in reading passages from the book, he is quoting from the past. Here, the emphasis on the fact and time of enunciation is found in the hesitations of the reading voice, the rigidity of the body of the reader, duplicated in the 'rigidity' of the camera framing. The viewer is caught in this intersection of times, encountering this past in this present, an encounter which the process of the film rehearses with the viewer as it is viewed and as such cannot be rehearsed 'beforehand' (Straub and Huillet have stressed the importance of not preparing Fortini, of not having any run through; the film is the only run-through).

The process of foregrounding enunciation, and of differentiating the discursive elements of the film, works against any imaginary construction of 'Fortini' as coherent identity, as an origin/source of discourse. The remark, 'You are not where your destiny is decided' (shot 103) can be read as a description of the processes of history and subject construction. The film's careful differentiation of the various historical modalities of Jewry/racism/fascism equally works against any tendency on the viewer's part to construct a set of 'eternal' themes around the persecution of Jews. *Fortini/Cani* thus constantly works to historicise the discourses of which it is composed, to separate them in relation to different times.

The problematic of history is also there in its references to memory and in its visual emphasis on the monument and the trace; memory and monument figure together as the terms of a constant emphasis on the constitution of history within a text and the historicising of that text itself, a process necessarily involving the historicising of the spectator, who has to place him/herself in relation to those monuments and traces: does he/she have a memory of the period of their initial inscription/construction? does he/she have a knowledge in relation to them? how and what do they mean for the spectator? The problematising of that, the offering of those traces and monuments without full exposition by a governing discourse, means that the spectator is placed in the position of thinking about both the presences and the absences in him/herself in relation to a set of histories. The text

refuses the production of history as a present identity for a full and present subject. 89

For instance, a circular pan (shot 17) from the monument at Vinca, through the town, country and mountains back to the monument, cutting to an upward pan (shot 18) over the inscription on the monument which finishes framing the tops of cypress trees against the sky. The inscription on the monument reads as follows: 'Vinca. Let the flame destructively lit by German barbarism remind you, enclosed in your marble mountains, of the martyrdom of your people'. The inscription retrospectively motivates the previous pan: Vinca/the town/its hills/the flame on top of the monument, already traversed in shot 17. The inscription is itself reinforced by the movement of the pan upward with the denotation of 'reading' and the connotations of the upward movement of the flame, of the soul, and its ending with the cypresses and their connotations of death. The time of the viewing, of enunciation, is also emphasised by the duration and movement of these pans, which are part of a large series of pans through the countryside, the rest of which have no discourse to aid interpretation. What knowledge/memory of Italy does the spectator bring to bear? Do these pans just provide a field for the projection of fantasies of 'holidays in the sun'? Do they enjoin the spectator to recognise scenes of other atrocities? Such questions concern absence – possible amnesia, absence of memory – and difference – difference between the 'real' spectator and the imagined spectator produced in the text.

This discourse about difference is developed in relation to the oedipal problematic, to a series of paternal representatives – the Jewish Law, the fascist authorities, the Party, Fortini's father. In relating to his family, Fortini presents himself as already distanced from, separated from what he sees as the 'secret rites' of Judaism (a point on which he identifies with his father). Equally, in the family he recalls a lack of insistence on the Christianity of his mother's side of the family. Fortini's struggle is to locate himself in the history of the European and Italian petty-bourgeoisie, and to locate himself in relation to his father. 'If we want to change reality it is necessary to know something about this immediate past' (shot 29). Fortini recalls being linked with his father at a moment of loss, separation in a crowd through the 'grain' (Barthes's term for the marking of the symbolic) of his father's voice, its tone of anguish and despair disturbing Fortini's assumed calm (his sutured identity).

For Fortini the act of writing is part of that investigation of political and personal history, a production of history through memory across an oedipal logic. The strategies of Straub and Huillet displace the attempted coherence of Fortini's writing into a juxtaposition of writing (past) and speech (present) onto different segments of writing in an order which focusses on the

90 act of speech as the production of presence and absence, the act of remembering and forgetting. The stress on difference, the gaps and absences in the film text, its construction of a contradictory fissured subject in and for a contradictory, fissured present, reinscribes textuality as a criterion of aesthetic and political value, a value implicit in Fortini's discourse. The production of separation in/from the text is duplicated in the text at the level of content in various discourses about difference, around problems of opposing tendencies to homogeneity, a suturing of contradictions.

The impossibility of 'equality' between people – the 'complex of historical forces in the simultaneity of the world' (shot 39) – imposes difference. Difference is essential to the relation to the other: 'My nearness to you, your separation from me'. The founding of the state of Israel, the 'fixing' of a Jewish God in relation to the State, produces a kind of parent figure in relation to whom identity is constituted – but identity over and against the difference of the other such that it produces racism, an identity constituted around that same 'hatred for difference' (shot 30) created by bourgeois anti-semitism as a diversion from class struggle. The identification of Church and State, described as proceeding from a 'medieval' mentality, overinscribes identity, to the paradoxical loss of Jewishness as a figure of universalism (an identity constituted from the recognition of difference). Fortini's discourse distinguishes a similar process in the development of Marxist parties: 'As regards "Messianic Marxism", I know well that its identification-surpassing of State and Church (ie Party) is its most tragic weakness' (shot 36). The problem of the Party conceived in terms of identity rather than difference is central to Fortini's neglected essay 'The Writers' Mandate and the End of Anti-Fascism' (*Screen* v 15 n 1, Spring 1974). The Party is always conceived in a fantasy of reunification of difference, which blocks the recognition of the possible radical otherness of the revolution. Here Fortini quotes Lu Xun:

'I realised that all revolutionary poets who had ideals and illusions before the Revolution could be driven to their death by the reality that they themselves had yearned for and sung of. And if the reality of the Revolution does not destroy the illusions and ideals of such poets then it is worth no more than an empty name' ('The Writers' Mandate', p 42).

Living in the real involves the living through of heterogeneity, of difference, and coming to terms with death: 'In exchange for reality you have been given a perfect illusion, a passable imitation of life. Comfortably distracted from your death in the enjoyment of a kind of immortality' (shot 24).

Fortini/Cani operates precisely to dislocate the terms of identity pointed to in relation to *Days of Hope*, the terms of class and subject. Separation, difference, contradiction constitute the

functions of its textual strategies, and indeed become aesthetic and political values in themselves. The film acts to insist not only on its relation to 'history in cinema' but also on its relation to history of cinema and, through its insistence on absence, fissure, invisibility, to 'cinema in history' as this latter relates to the ideology of history in the visible. 91

NOTE *Fortini/Cani* is now obtainable in Britain from the Artificial Eye Film Company, 3 Tottenham Street, London W1, whom we should also like to thank for making a print available to us during the writing of this article.

The Television Festival

John Caughie

The Television Festival held in Edinburgh in conjunction with the Film Festival last summer has already been well reported, most notably by Rod Allen in *Broadcast* (September 12, 1977) and by Charles Barr in *The Listener* (September 15, 1977). What the following notes attempt to do is to place the Festival in the context of developing work on television, and to draw out for a theory of television some of the implications of what emerged and what was repressed. At the same time as being a critique of the Festival, the notes attempt to propose some kind of auto-critique (as participant, rather than reporter) of the nature of the opposition which was offered to the dominant structure and ideology of the event, and to formulate a basis for future strategies of intervention in television. Centrally, the argument is that intervention should not be thought simply as oppositional, intervening in a monolithic institution – or even a monolithic festival – but should be seen as establishing the grounds for productive theoretical work within the institutions, within theoretical practice itself, and, crucially, within the bringing together of the two.

The present surge of interest in the analysis and theorisation of television is itself a phenomenon which might usefully be analysed and theorised. Each new article, each event, seems to initiate for itself the history of television theory, and there is a pervasive sense

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The present surge of interest in the analysis and theorisation of television is itself a phenomenon which might usefully be analysed and theorised. Each new article, each event, seems to initiate for itself the history of television theory, and there is a pervasive sense

92 that a new site for 'radical penetration' is being unearthed. It seems necessary to account for this development in some way, understanding it as something more than a simple trend, or as the simple end of single causes, posing it instead as a moment within a conjuncture, and as a point of entry into the analysis of that conjuncture. This can be taken in two senses. In the first place, in the context of the present level of development of capitalism in this country, with a social formation more and more in the grip of its own contradictions at the level of production and politics, but with a liberal democracy not yet prepared to embark on overt repression as a way of controlling these contradictions, the role of ideology is peculiarly important. The 'apparatuses' of ideology and their systems of representation offer an image of the world which expresses contradiction as plurality, hegemonic power as unity, and class struggle as wage bargaining. Within the importance of ideology, television can be seen to have a particular effectivity insofar as it traverses the ideological functions of information, education, entertainment and general cultural cohesion. Within the specifically British context, British television can be seen to have acquired a certain cultural validity ('the least worst television . . .') because less blatantly (or less universally) commercial than, say, American television, and a degree of credibility produced by a tradition of 'public service' (and, in the case of BBC, 'paternalism') unmarked by the internal and external struggles of, say, ORTF. In this wider context, then, there is both a justification for, and a partial explanation of the development of theoretical work on television: a growing realisation of the importance of television within the present conjuncture as a producer of ideological representations with its own specific signifying practices and its own specific effectivity. At the same time there is a dissatisfaction with a crude sociological approach which might give to television an exclusive attention, justifying itself on the grounds that television reaches more people, and more often, than film, theatre, literature or other forms of cultural mediation. While recognising that this is so, it is also necessary to recognise that television's ideological effect does not derive simply from numbers (of people, or hours), but is produced as well by a system of representations which is specific to television in the way in which it is produced, but which exists in a particular relationship with other systems of representation in other specific practices – film, theatre, etc. For this reason, the study of television does not represent a shift from one exclusive area to another, but operates as part of the development of a theory of representations and ideology.

Within the development of a political theory of ideology and representations the intervention in television marks a precise point – the point, in fact, at which the concept of ideology intersects with concrete and specific institutions; the point at which,

in Althusser's sense, ideologies present themselves in institutions. That is to say, the development of interest in the study of television is also a conjunctural moment in the study of representations, and, as such, is more than simply a 'natural extension' following from the saturation of film study. What this moment recognises is the political necessity of studying representations within concrete institutions (with specific institutional practices and relations), within the relations between institutions (notably, the 'television institution' and the institutions of the State – law, parliament, etc), and within the relations of institutions and the social formation (again, 'public service'). It becomes apparent that one of the effects of theoretical work on television is to problematise the notion of the 'institutions' of ideology, particularly as it has been used in theoretical work on film. The notion of 'the cinematic institution' in the sense used by Metz, where the term encompasses systems of representation, production and reception, has been an important concept in this film theory. At the same time, there have been difficulties in specifying the precise and complex relations between the 'cinematic institution', the State, and the social formation (viz, the Editors of *Cahiers on Young Mr Lincoln*, where the analysis of the production of meaning is acute, but where the conjunctural analysis and the analysis of apparently causal relations between dominant ideology and textual ideology are general and indistinct). It is not to devalue the work on the production of ideology in film to note that it has tended to work from text to ideology within a broad sense of institution. The tendency has been to read the institution out of the ideology, or to assume its existence somewhere in the space between spectator and screen. This has allowed advances along a certain route, but it has also produced certain blind-spots. The problem seems to lie in the collapsing into one another of two terms of the Althusserian problematic – the 'apparatus' and the 'institution' – a collapse which is permitted by an uncertainty in Althusser's own handling of the terms. What happens is that the 'institution' (which Althusser characterises as 'concrete', 'distinct and specialised'), becomes an 'apparatus' (defined as a concept with a reality – 'culture'), taking on the functioning of an apparatus, but losing its own distinctness as a concrete system of relations and practices. In his essay 'Ideology and the State' (in *Lenin and Philosophy*, NLB 1971), where he introduces a list of Ideological State Apparatuses there is a considerable confusion between the Apparatuses themselves as institutions ('the religious ISA', 'the political ISA'), press and television as institutions of the communications ISA, and 'Literature, the Arts, sports, etc' as institutions of the cultural ISA. For the purposes of analysis, there are obvious and important distinctions to be made between religion in general, literature, and television. The three are 'institutions' in very distinct senses, coming together only in a

- 94 functionalism which places each as a producer of ideologies for the State, their operational diversity being unified under the ruling ideology, the ideology of the ruling class. For Althusser, the generalisation of the notion of the institution allows his attention to be directed to another, and, for his project, more important arena, in the same way as, for film theory, the generalisation of the 'cinematic institution' has concentrated attention on the production of ideology within signifying practices.

What the analysis and theorisation of television as a specific practice seems to require is a more exact sense of institutions. Broadly, the distinction has to be made between television as a system of representations (television, that is, as a specific signifying practice which institutes ideological meanings), and television as concrete institution existing in relation to other institutions, apparatuses and formations (press, communications, State, public). Further, and more precisely, within the concept of the television institution the distinction has to be made between television defined as an institution by its relationship with other institutions and apparatuses, and television defined by its own internal and specific institutional practices. It is this third level, the internal institutional practices, which is largely repressed by the generalisation of the notion of institutions – a repression which, by ignoring the contradictory practices and ideologies within the institutions, leaves analysis no way of accounting for contradictions in the 'television message' other than by recourse to accidents, 'slip-ups', and 'hiccups'. It is on this level, also, that the various specific 'company' practices can be identified and separated, further breaking up the notion of the monolithic institution.

Fear of empiricism, then, should not prohibit the empirical study of institutional practices. What television offers as a specific practice – what it insists on – is the study of the production of ideological representations by specific practices within definite relations – practices of signification, relations between institutions and apparatuses, practices and relations within institutions. Three levels: to study television is to study the articulation of the three.

This is not to say that the institutional practices and relations of television are necessarily more determinant in its specific production of ideology than the institutions of the cinema for the production of ideology in films. It is to say, partly, that it is more explicit, at least in its relations to the public and the State, and therefore more accessible; and to say further that, in the peculiarity of its relations to State and government, it offers a way into the analysis of the specifically British articulation of ideological apparatus and State. Defining itself as 'public service', the BBC juggles operational independence with financial dependence, editorial freedom with 'informal contacts' and 'strong recommendations', situating itself within the 'bias' of State ideology. Reith's notorious dictum at the time of the General Strike: 'Assuming

that the BBC is for the people and that the Government is for the people, it follows that the BBC must be for the Government in this crisis too', becomes Curran's: 'Yes, we are biased – biased in favour of parliamentary democracy.' ITV juggles commercial interests and public interests with equal dexterity, masking its necessary legal relations with the State in the form of the IBA, an 'independent authority'. The contradictions of these relations between State and institution are material with echoes in institutional practice, and it is for this reason that the development of a theory of television has particular importance in the development of a theory of representations and ideology: ideology can be found in relation to specific practices of text, institution and State, within a precise political historical conjuncture.

Given the importance of television as a means of ideological production and dissemination within the present conjuncture, and its importance within the conjuncture of a developing theory, it is also important to emphasise the (albeit limited) accessibility of television's institutional practices and ideologies. Within the contradictions of the firmly maintained belief in their own 'public accountability' the television institutions have a certain sensitivity to interventions from the public which they 'serve'. While it is necessary to recognise the limits of this sensitivity, it is also necessary to recognise that it is there. Again, while recognising that those who control television are likely to be more sensitive, in an immediate sense, to the populist, 'consensus' interventions of someone like Mary Whitehouse or the functionaries of the State, than to those of, say, the Glasgow University Media Group, it is worth noting also that the Media Group are invited to television conferences, and that specific and organised interventions *may* produce limited results.

More important, though, is the recognition that the institution of television is not monolithic, producing ideology for the State mechanically and easily, but is itself the site of struggles at the economic, political and ideological levels. While these struggles become most manifest when they take off from wages or conditions of service – from 'industrial relations' – it also has to be seen that struggles on the political and ideological levels will produce contradictions within the institutions which may or may not appear directly as contradictions on the screen, or as moments of tension between institution and State, but which will, in any case, produce certain forms of development for television as a system of representations and as an ideological institution. While the television institution may work to conceal the contradictions within its own institutional practices, relations and ideologies, asserting itself simply as reflecting the consensus of the day, the work is never easy or complete, and the self-image leaves too much out of the picture. While there is absolutely no doubt that television is massively successful in producing ideological representa-

96 tions of a world with non-conflictual spaces for everyone, to assume this as an easy, mechanical process leaves no possibility of accounting for precise developments in television other than as reflections of developments in the world at large, responses to the needs of the State. It becomes impossible to offer an adequate account of television as a producer of ideology, producing it both from its specific relations to the State and government within a conjuncture, and from its specific internal relations and balance of internal forces. A programme such as *World in Action* – posed as investigative and hard-hitting – produces its ideology not in response to needs of the State or commerce, but out of the coming together (possibly in tension) of the ‘needs’ and ambitions of a certain professional fraction within television (who may be hostile or indifferent to the State), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a system of representations enshrined as programme format and ‘good television’. The point to be studied is the way in which (and the extent to which) contradictory ideologies are brought to unity within a unified system of representations – and the way in which it could be otherwise, not through utopian alternative systems of representations, but through precise developments in the contradictory institutional relations, practices and ideologies.

It is precisely here that theory can be posed as intervention, intervening in those institutional contradictions, offering positions for grouping – not established on the outside and parachuted in as some kind of practitioner’s kit, but, ideally, developed out of working relationships and debates between ‘practitioners’ and ‘theorists’, at least developed within some precise account of the articulation of signifying and institutional practices. This concept of theory as intervention has important implications for the ways in which theory is produced and disseminated. Again, it marks a precise point in the development of a theory of representations and ideology to open theory not simply to questions of validity, but also to those of address.

It is within the context of this developing theoretical work on television that the importance of the Edinburgh Television Festival can best be examined here – examined for the extent to which it can be used for the production of theory, for the development of knowledge about institutional practices, relations and ideologies, and for the establishment of working relationships, political and theoretical groupings – examined also for the limitations which ideology and structure impose on usefulness.

The five-day 1977 Edinburgh International Television Festival evolved out of a two-day television event in 1976 comprising a retrospective of the work of the late Scottish producer/director, James McTaggart, and a ‘McTaggart Lecture’, given by John McGrath. Both the 1976 event and the 1977 festival were officially

part of the Edinburgh Film Festival, with a certain overlap in personnel on the two executive committees, but with an increasing autonomy in control and virtually complete autonomy in finance. The Television Festival, operating under an advisory committee, had its own administration, and its own source of subsidy in the television companies, principally BBC Scotland and Scottish Television. 97

Delegates were invited – a few from the BFI, a very few from academic institutions, the recognised television critics and journalists, and a massive preponderance (certainly predictable, perhaps justified) of those professionally engaged in ‘the industry’, either in a freelance capacity, or as members of the companies. What is less certain (and probably less justified) was the composition of the professional delegation – the impression was of an under-representation of junior and technical staff on the one hand, and of top management on the other (with one or two exceptions), leaving a dominance to the established ‘creative’ production personnel and managers. Given the subject – drama – this is obviously explicable, but its effect was to produce a degree of homogeneity in the television delegation (‘everyone knew each other’) which tended to reinforce impressions of a unified professional discourse. This was compounded, for those seeking to insert an alternative discourse, by the obscurity of the arrangements for admission to non-delegates – daily ‘passes’ – and by official pronouncements that the event was going to be massively over-subscribed and entry almost impossible. Add a pinch of left-wing paranoia, and there is a classic recipe for suspicions of exclusion and the return of the conspiracy theory. Whether or not the suspicions and the theory are true – and there are various ways of apportioning blame to paranoia, administrative error, and administrative intentions – each moderated by extenuating circumstances – the important fact is that they produce an effect in the alternative discourse, in the way in which it was offered and in the way in which it was received. This is not to say that the discourse was solely determined by events before the Festival started – a scandalous opening after-dinner speech (the ‘McTaggart Lecture’ brought low) by Marcel Ophuls, which would have been really reactionary only if it had been more coherent; occasional bouts of explicit anti-intellectualism from, among others, James Cellan Jones and Kevin Laffan; and a general willingness too readily to reject ‘difficult’ theory (the formulations of Raymond Williams as well as those of BFI/SEFT) – these would, in any case, have produced the apparently inevitable sense of confrontation.

Now, confrontation in itself is not a bad thing, and it is precisely the importance of this and future Edinburgh television events that they should provide the space for the confrontation of a number of practices and ideologies contained in the theoretical and the

98 professional discourses. The alternative to such confrontation is assimilation or neglect. At the same time, it is crucial to be aware of the deformities in theory which can be produced under the particular conditions of a politics of confrontation and intervention. Precisely, it is important to be aware that the two discourses – the professional and the theoretical – do not, in fact, have the unity in which they were constituted by the event. Each discourse is, in fact, marked by specific tensions, struggles, and contradictions, and it was exactly the limitation of the effectiveness of the event that neither discourse succeeded in usefully penetrating the contradictions of the other. For theory, the difficulty lay in finding a mode of address which neither falsified nor mystified. For the institutions, there was the tendency to close ranks in the face of theory, to pose theory and practice as oppositions, and to situate the professional discourse within practice (Jeremy Isaacs: 'I have yet to see anything come out of the British Film Institute that would demonstrate that we'd get good programmes if they were the kind of people who made them' – quoted in *Broadcast*, September 12, 1977). The homogeneity of the delegation was obviously illusory (and more illusory to those within the system of first-name relationships), but in the face of the intervention of a theoretical or political discourse, the professional discourse did tend to unify itself, or at least gather itself into the limited diversity of a professional conference, centering itself on 'the practical problems'. The 'professionals', then, constituted as a body by one side; 'academics and semio-logists' constituted as a body by the other side; and between them an uncertainty, or a division, about who or what the 'Festival' was for: professional conference, public celebration, theoretical event, intervention in practice. . . . The effect was to produce a frustration, limiting the occasion as a working 'event', confusing it as a 'Festival'.

The choice of television drama as the area of focus is an important one, and it is useful to emphasise again the origins of the 1977 event in the 1976 McTaggart retrospective and the intervention by John McGrath on the issue of the dominance of naturalism in television drama (a version of which is in *Sight & Sound*, v 46, n 2, Spring 1977, pp 100-105). There, already, can be seen the confusion of festival and event, the retrospective as an apparent celebration, proving television to be art because it has an artist (the well-worn path), McGrath's intervention raising substantial issues not only about television as a system of representations, but articulating this with notions of television's relationship to the State, and of its own internal practices and struggles. In the 1977 event, the two tendencies – celebration and intervention – were still discernible, modified for a larger audience, still existing in uneasy relationship. One strand of the press response held that

the vast range of screened material was what the festival was about, another (narrower) strand (notably Charles Barr in *The Listener*) regretted that the diversity of material precluded the possibility of the event paying detailed attention to its subject. It is certainly true that the only session in which any reference was made to screened material as evidence of signifying practices rather than as 'an issue' (of censorship) was the session on drama-documentary, which was introduced with a compilation of material. Unfortunately, this session fell victim to the other main structural limitation of the Festival as 'event' – the attempt to conduct the whole business in plenary with comments being taken in sequence, without any other connection than that they happened to catch the chairperson's eye in that order.

Nevertheless, while the respective claims of celebration and work will have to be resolved for the future – articulated together, rather than the one precluding the other – it seems important to confess in retrospect that both tendencies are there, to be developed, and that the Festival in general, and the focus on drama in particular, were not *solely* informed by the desire to constitute television as art. Or rather, it is necessary to recognise that, even within that as a dominant tendency, there is again not a single, unanimous discourse, but several, each with specific objectives for the Festival, pushing and pulling the Festival in different ways. Like television itself, the Festival is not monolithic and can be exploited in its contradictions and confusions.

The focus on drama, then, was not necessarily an institutional deceit – a subterfuge to insinuate television into art. What is interesting, though, is the way in which McGrath's attack on naturalism in television drama was appropriated. It had been McGrath's thesis that the concentration on naturalism was not a requirement of the medium (an essentialism), nor an accident, but was the product of a historical moment within the institutions and within their relations to the State. He had referred to a period in the sixties when the BBC 'allowed a benign anarchy' within which a minority of young directors, script-writers and producers were allowed, even encouraged, to work out their formal concerns, with 'immediate, unmediated access to the resources and the audience', always within a framework in which 'the majority of the staff producers had anyway done a thorough job of interiorising the values of the ruling class', and McGrath situates this 'Golden Age' within a conjuncture when the 'British ruling class was riding high on the Harold Macmillan wave'. He continues:

'That era has died out. Historically, the economic collapse of Britain has undermined the confidence of the ruling class. Politically, they *do* feel threatened. So the BBC, sensitive as ever, has altered its structure. Anarchy is over. Centralised control,

There is much in McGrath's presentation which has to be viewed from a critical distance – the impressionism of his account of the relationships of institution, ruling class and conjuncture allows for an easy drop into conspiracy theories – but it has the strength of being built on precisely that articulation of signifying practice, institutional practice, State and conjuncture, which is being argued here. The articulation, if not the analysis, could be seen to provide the basis for further debate.

The thesis, and particularly the naming of names which it involved, was hugely controversial within the institutions – a lesson there on effective intervention. On that controversy, and on the excitement which it created, the 1977 Festival seems to have been founded, the hope presumably being that a similar heat could again be generated, this time in the presence of a larger audience. Two sessions were devoted to realism and naturalism, and one to the contingent area of drama-documentary. What happened to McGrath's case, however, was that it lost its reference to the specificity of institutional structure and its relations to the State within a political conjuncture, and, despite the efforts of Raymond Williams, the political element was frequently reduced to formulations like 'All art is political, even non-political art', and 'Of course my programmes reflect the world the way I see it'. In the second session, Dennis Potter completely appropriated the debate to one about artistic freedom, evoking something close to adulation with the humility of his pleas to be allowed to be an individual and to paint the world the way he saw it. If any confirmation of the dominant ideology of the 'creative' personnel were needed it could be found in the response to Potter's intervention. The possibility of developing notions of the particular places which groups and individuals could occupy within the institutions, and the strategies which were necessary if individuals and groups were not merely to be noble victims, was lost, and attempts to pose some other model of production processes were greeted as just short of apostasy. Even Cellan Jones, who had earlier argued for the importance of producers and directors in the creative process (the discussion tended to stick at the level of credits), was swept up in the sentimentality of it all, and recognised passionately that each was creative only insofar as he (she?) was individual – or vice versa.

In a sense, this can cause no surprise, simply reflecting, as it does, from within the institutions, dominant bourgeois ideology. What this ideology involves for the institution of television, though, is the denial of its own specificity as a set of institutional practices with specific relations, and a tendency to see television production of art as being generally identical with, say, theatre

production. The fetishism of art de-institutionalises its production. 101
Art emerges as an ideal essence produced out of inspiration and creativity, separated from the real relations and practices of its institutions, and from the place and function of these institutions within the social formation. What is interesting is the way in which this discourse about art and creative individuality is able to maintain itself in the face of conflicting professional and/or managerial interests. Again, there is not a single institutional or professional discourse, but several, each with a specific understanding of relations and practices – the discourse of the artist (the right of self-expression), the discourse of the professional (the right of decision-making and professional status), the discourse of the manager (the interests of the institution and 'public service') – discourses which may overlap (which may struggle for priority in the same individual), but which may also be brought into contradiction; contradictions which may be continually repressed in the unity of television as a system of representations, but which nevertheless inform the practice, relationships and specific struggles of television as an institution. Continually, the discourse about art and individuality, which always seemed to assume universal assent, was fractured by fractional interests – professional status, salary gradings, budget allocations, departmental rivalries – but in a way which was always recuperable into the dominant ideology of creativity, recuperable precisely because it was grounded not in a theorised problematic, but in a variety of 'operative ideologies', fractional discourses which had reference to fractional practices but which had difficulty in conceptualising the relation of fraction to institution, institution to State. The specification of these 'operative ideologies' – ideologies brought into the institutions with their bearers, but congealing into specific forms with specific operational effects on contact with institutional practice – is an important part of the understanding of television, and it was part of the value of the Edinburgh event that it threw them into relief.

The focus on drama, and on naturalism within drama, had the potential value of specifying signifying practices. What emerged in fact, though, for a theory of television, was the difficulty of posing signifying practices without involving institutional practices and the whole system of relationships, contradictions and controls which operates both within the institutions, and between the institutions and the outside world. For a theory of television, the need was apparent to theorise signification, institutions, the State, and the articulation between them – simply, the need to understand 'operative ideologies' and fractional discourses, not as errors or as 'false consciousness', but, within their own effectivity, as material elements in television's production of ideology, and to see this production not as the result of individuals or groups freely expressing, or even as the result of autonomous signifying

102 practices, but as the result of specific, concrete and complex relations between individuals, fractions, institutions, government, capital, and State, within a conjuncture.

The denial of the relationship between institution and State became most apparent in the session on censorship, the penultimate session, which came along like a god from the machine or a premature Auld Lang Syne, to unify the discourse of the 'creatives' against the repression of the 'controllers'. The attack was spirited, but in the absence of any sense of television as having an ideological function, censorship tended to be posed as mindless, rude, or 'demeaning'. The quarrel remained a domestic one, since to have opened the institutional door would have been to let politics and the State come in.

The hero of the hour, again (or the victim – the distinction became blurred), was Dennis Potter, whose play *Brimstone and Treacle* was refused transmission by the BBC (despite the fact that the whole drama department supported it) largely on the grounds, it seems, that Alasdair Milne found it 'nauseating'. Potter's honour was shared, however, in a paradox worthy of a show trial, by the head of the BBC drama department, Shaun Sutton, who had supported the play, but who was brought on, in the absence of any real BBC controllers, to make a 'confession' which was widely hailed as 'courageous'. What emerged 'from the 'confession' was a strange network of control stretched out between department heads and channel controllers, which never seemed to operate on the same principles from one instance to the next, but which always seemed to produce the same results – the avoidance of controversy. Sutton's list of instances served to deny a pattern of interference, establishing instead criteria of artistic taste and an undefined 'suitability'. Censorship was posed as a set of unique acts and individual decisions. No mention was made of the constraints implicit in a system based on 'referring up', whereby control is maintained by establishing a knowledge of what is required and what is prohibited – a knowledge with a particular effectivity in an institution, as described by Tom Burns, where promotional prospects take on a key role (Tom Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*, London, Macmillan 1977). If cynicism creeps in to the description of the censorship discussion, it is precisely because this session was widely reported in the press as if it were the final justification of the Festival – a session at which 'real issues' were discussed, rather than 'vague theories'.

Now, in the context of television, there can be considerable interest in the discussion of 'real issues', particularly when these issues involve the application of explicit controls. What happened here, though, very strongly, was that 'real issues' were discussed in an imaginary context: very strongly, television was constituted

as if it were the same kind of marginal or class-restricted practice as theatre has become. The debate was turned into an issue of artistic and/or professional freedom; the problem of that being that such a debate tends always to generalise into an issue of eternal principles, without proper attention to the social place and function of the institution at a particular historical moment. It is apparent that the removal of explicit censorship from the theatre was not simply the result of campaigning, but was an effect of theatre's increasing marginality. To treat television as if it were theatre, to treat freedom of expression on television as simply a matter of principle, is to fail to ask the questions about the function – the ideological function – which television performs within the social formation. The heated discussion of censorship at the Festival was almost entirely diversionary. Anthony Smith indicated an awareness of the problem: 103

' Much of this discussion has been an evasion: by concentrating on the anecdotes we have concealed the fact that the censored bits of TV are just the tip of a massive iceberg of controls and constraints of all kinds ' (quoted in *Broadcast*, cit).

But his intervention was largely lost in the dust kicked up by the stampede of liberal declarations. It took Penry Jones, representing the IBA, to point out, under pressure, that the removal of institutional controls would simply mean the imposition of parliamentary control; though he pointed it out in an odd way: 'Parliament won't let people parade their personal prejudices on television' (ibid) – presumably referring only to those prejudices which parliament doesn't share. In any case, the remark was quickly diverted into the question of accountability, which meant here the right of the IBA, as a collection of individuals and judges of art, to impose their opinions on the professionals and artists.

This is not to say that the debate about censorship had no importance, or that nothing was to be learned from its evasions and repressions, but to suggest that its importance was not the one which was given to it. The sense, again, was of a real struggle conducted under imaginary conditions. Again, there is a need to see the ideologies as material, and, on the issue of censorship and controls, to see the absolute inevitability of a certain contradiction between fractional discourses and the institutional discourse – inevitability of conflict between television as a set of practices and relations determining, but also determined by, the 'operative ideologies' of a number of specialised fractions, notably ideologies involving responsibility and freedom; television as an institution with an allegiance to 'the public' and the State; and television as a bureaucratic institution with a need for controls, checks, and incentives. It is fairly unusual for these contradictions and conflicts to emerge into the open. More typically, they remain invisible as institutional struggles between conflicting

104 'operative ideologies' – freedom and control, private ambition and public responsibility, the needs of 'good television' and the ideological needs of 'balance' – struggles which it is the institution's role to resolve, but which, in their specificity, produce a particular form of resolution, a line of progression which is never entirely within the planned control of the institution; struggles, that is to say, which are determinant.

When the contradictions and conflicts emerge into the open, as, particularly, in the form of explicit censorship, whether from within the institutions, or from without, they produce a precise effect. The imposition by institution and/or government of explicit control – censorship, repression – is always a failure for ideology, for the ideology whose function is to contain contradiction. The failure varies in degree – there is a difference between the censorship of drama, which can be posed as an internal decision based on aesthetic criteria, and whose effect is in any case mediated by the bourgeois belief that the artist is always at odds with society and occasionally needs controlling, and, on the other hand, censorship of news or current affairs, which is an explicit admission of the relationship between State and institution, the relationship on the masking of which depends television's claims to legitimacy as an 'independent', 'balanced' voice. Censorship, then, is always at least a crack in the unified and unifying discourse of television, a point of stress, a failure to conceal contradictory forces. It does not, however, produce its effects automatically since there are a number of other ideological 'tools' which can be brought to bear on it – 'good taste', 'national security'. In this sense, Gus Macdonald's invitation to his colleagues to 'go public' on 'interference' from behind the scenes can produce only a limited effect. What is more necessary is to pose censorship as a site for the analysis of the relations and functions which produce it. To pose it simply as an issue of principle, which is the liberal response, is to neglect both where it comes from and what it does.

The insertion of theory into Edinburgh discussions operated (with the possible exception of Raymond Williams) under a politics of intervention. At certain points, the intervention did succeed in flushing out interesting contradictions – the presentation on 'Soap Opera and Women', though massively misunderstood, did, to an extent, catch a section of the profession off balance, and did reveal a sexism in the programmes which was reflected in the sexist disproportions of the institutions as a whole and the Festival in particular (four women on this panel, two on all the other panels put together). At other points it seemed that the intervention succeeded only in coming between the executive and his/her pleasure, or, alternatively, in brightening up a dull debate. Perhaps for the latter reason, though, the presence of a theoretical discourse did attract attention, and even some sympathy, during the

event and in the subsequent press reports. Largely these were 105
couched in (understandable) criticisms of mystification, but it is
nevertheless important to recognise that the theoretical vacuum
surrounding television (where theory means more than 'operative
ideology') does leave a space in which a developed theoretical
intervention can be effectively placed. The notion of television as
some kind of ideological apparatus was insinuated, though it
seems likely that the report of the Festival by Rod Allen in *Broad-
cast* was as important an intervention in this area as any made
at Edinburgh:

'The presence of the theorists revealed, valuably, that many of
the assumptions made by practitioners in television are open to
question – and particularly the bland assumption that television
is in some way "impartial". The notion of the production of
ideology by television is distasteful to some, but needs to be
recognised, and the theorists' interventions in the discussions
helped many practitioners do so. It also helped people get to
grips with the concept of broadcasting institutions' "ownership"
of reality, and the lengths to which the institutions go – often
unwittingly – to maintain their authority vis-à-vis the public.
Maybe, after this event, broadcasters who feel that they are in
some way being accused of malpractice when someone suggests
that they apply an ideology to their work won't get so upset:
and that will be no mean achievement for a week in Scotland'
(*Broadcast*, cit).

And again:

'... all of it adds up to what the theoreticians call the production
of ideology; and an understanding of the fact is what is required,
together with an understanding that this ideology is susceptible to
outside analysis and the recognition that such analysis can be
useful in approaching one's own work (if it can be understood,
that is – but that's another story and one for which the
theoreticians, with their assumptions of prior knowledge and
uniquely opaque jargon, need their share of admonition)' (ibid).

Rod Allen's sympathy is perhaps untypical (appearing in a trade
paper, though, his views are important), but, because of his
apparent sympathy, his criticisms have to be taken the more
seriously. Too often, because of an inadequate analysis of the
nature of the event, and because of the difficulties of critical
discourse, the intervention of theory was misunderstood or not
understood. This is an auto-critique, but it also involves a critique –
operating within a dominant ideology which seemed to be markedly
anti-theory and anti-intellectual, and within a structure which
made the elaboration of 'difficult' discourse impossible, theory
could only be posed in the most general terms, as a general
intervention, without reference to specific practice of text or

106 institution. If the Festival is to take itself seriously, and to take television seriously, it has to find a way of balancing 'festival' and 'event' – a way, precisely, of providing a location in which work can be elaborated and detailed, but a location to which a wide representation from the institutions will come. Given that the value of Edinburgh is potentially the confrontation of two practices – the professional and the theoretical – there obviously has to be an awareness of the danger of driving either term away. If the Festival fails to find its balance, it can only be a series of opportunist celebrations, this year's cashing in on the entertainment values of last year's, or, at best, a professional conference. The objective conditions of Edinburgh at that time of year suggest that it could be more.

The problem for theory, in the context of Edinburgh and of television in general, is obviously one of address – how to present a theoretical discourse in such a way that it can be an intervention in professional practices and ideologies. Within that problem, there are the questions of what kind of theory, and what kind of intervention. The first of these is in the process of development, and this article implies one approach. What is apparent is that, in terms of the specific conditions of a meeting of practices such as that at Edinburgh, there is a need for a sustained, considered and detailed problematic to replace sniping and guerilla raiding. The intervention has to be posed – contingent upon a reformed structure – less in the oppositional terms of two homogeneous discourses facing each other across the chasm, more in terms of seeking footholds in the cracks, and placing toes in the door. It is worth noting, again, that even the sniping of this year's Festival produced a certain response. Cynicism towards theoretical debates seen as external to the institutions (theory divorced from professional practice, 'What can you do with theory in the pressure of the studio?') seems to be a mark of the 'operative ideology' of the professional in the institutions, and a highly developed division of labour produces a hierarchy of status marked by rivalry, fragmentation and isolation. In such a context, the nature of the intervention of theory and analysis is less to offer alternative institutional structures or signifying strategies, more to pose theory as it intersects with present institutional practice, and, crucially, to pose theory as positions for grouping – for productive relationships between theoretical practice and professional practice within the institutions, within theory, and between the two.

POSTSCRIPT. Plans for next year's Festival seem to be going ahead, centering, it seems, on the notion of investigating the kinds of material which are not seen on British television – not explicitly censorship, but a more general investigation of absences on British television by looking at their presence in other television services. The questions which this could raise about the nationally specific

functioning of ideology, about the nationally specific relations of State and institutions, about political conjuncture, are obviously central questions, and if the structure allows for it, important work could be done. What emerges is a certain pattern – the heat generated by John McGrath's intervention produces an event focussed on drama, the heat generated by the censorship debate produces an extension of the theme. To put this pattern down simply to the instincts of the professional entertainer for cashing in on a past success, is to miss the way in which these instincts operate through, and mediate, both professional concerns and a genuine desire to explore the nature of the institution – to map out the field. Like the desire for 'good television' or a 'good story', the desire for a 'good Festival', in its focus if not in its structure, has a certain neutrality which does not inevitably serve the supposed best interests of the institution. It is largely up to a developed, articulate, and accessible theoretical intervention, within the limitations imposed by structure, to exploit that neutrality to its own advantage.

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Marxism and Culture

In *Screen* v 18 n 1, Spring 1977, some of the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is extensively reviewed by Rosalind Coward, under the heading 'Class, "Culture" and the Social Formation'. As contributors to that work, and specifically to the two articles in *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* which have been chosen as exemplary of it, we should like to make some comments, in the interest of further debate, in response to her attack. Generally, we want to argue that Rosalind Coward has used these two articles to construct a single, monolithic 'Centre line', which provides her with an all too easy target, but which – we would emphatically maintain – is a misrepresentation of the Centre's practice. In the pursuit of this singular enemy, significant theoretical differences between the two articles are conveniently elided and conflated. The articles discussed are therefore subject to serious and extensive misrepresentation. We should also like, as a matter of principle, to repudiate the sectarian manner in which this attack is conducted, and to suggest that sectarianism of this order undermines the possibility of constructive debate. We seriously question whether the casting of *Screen* and WPCS into two opposing 'camps', the implied contrast between the more adequate (but under-developed) contribution of *Screen* to 'a Marxist theory of the social formation', in contrast with our work, 'which on first appearance offer[s] an analysis rooted more firmly within a Marxist analysis', and the contestation over some notional space or occupied area, which takes up the first four paragraphs of Rosalind Coward's article, is a useful or appropriate way to conduct a complex and important argument.

We believe that there has been a consistent theoretical thrust to the Centre's work – which we would characterise as the project of developing theories of cultural and ideological formations within the broad framework of a Marxist problematic, without resorting either to economism or idealism. But this has certainly been consistent with different theoretical positions, projects and types of work, within that general framework. 'Resistance through Rituals' and 'The Unity of Current Affairs TV' can in no sense be held as representative of all the Centre's work. In fact, not only are these two articles attempts to construct very different objects – working-class youth formations in the 1950s and 1960s, political television coverage in the 1974 conjuncture: there are significant differences both in the tendencies they represent, and the problematics they employ. The first is an attempt, using Gramscian concepts, to relate a set of cultural phenomena –

110 usually analysed without any reference to hegemony or class practices – to the question of class formations and the construction of hegemony: the second is an attempt, using one of Althusser's formulations about ideology, and supporting arguments from Poulantzas, precisely to establish the 'relative autonomy' of the signifying practices of television from any simple reduction to the 'interests' of any single homogeneous class. These real differences – a necessary feature of ongoing work – are wholly obliterated or ignored in the treatment to which they are subject. The resulting conflation is such as to make the specificity of each article – the specific advances and detours which the two, as a 'couple', clearly represent – disappear from view. This apparent lack of interest in the historical and theoretical specificity of any concrete question or investigation is a marked feature of Rosalind Coward's article, and seems to be either the source or the effect of an unmediated and abstract theoretical purism. It is this practice of conflation which enables Rosalind Coward to sustain against us the charges of 'empiricism', 'idealism', 'Hoggartianism', 'Leavisism', 'reductionism' and 'Lukacsianism'. The clearly signalled attempt in both the WPCS articles to address theoretical issues *through* a more concrete or conjunctural instance is converted, by a simple labelling exercise, into 'empiricism'. And since all 'empiricisms' are the same Empiricism, and Idealism is, for all practical purposes, its mirror image, it is not difficult to see how we can be *fixed* by this characteristic pincer-movement, impaled by this binarism, and our collective heads prepared for the theoretical chopping-block. Whether theoretical clarification and argument is advanced by this procedure, we beg leave to doubt.

In taking (as the 'overview' article in *Resistance through Rituals* does) *post-war* youth cultural formations as an object of analysis, we nowhere imagined that we were dealing with the most significant cultural feature of the British social formation, nor even that it provided *a* or *the* privileged point of entry into such an analysis. No such comprehensive claim is either stated or entertained in the article. What this object *did* provide is an instance or problem, within our own field of inquiry, which has been extensively theorised in a certain way: a theorisation which has real effects, both theoretically and practically. In developing an analysis posited on different concepts, we saw the article as necessarily – and correctly – engaged in a practice of theoretical struggle, on an already 'given' and constructed theoretical field – terrain which cannot always be of our own choosing. Rosalind Coward seems to us to make the elementary mistake of reading a critique of sociology (the dominant form of theoretical knowledge about such questions) as a 'sociological critique'.

Our problem, in preparing the 'overview' article for WPCS 7/8 was to show that youth cultural formations could not be

treated as transparent, autonomous and discrete entities, free spontaneous creations, lacking all determination. That is the position we regard as 'idealist'. What was required was a fundamental reconceptualisation, situating these cultural formations within the framework of a more structural analysis, without (a) falling into reductionism, or (b) losing the specificity of the cultural level and its practices. (So far as the second point is concerned, the 'overview' thus points directly to the later essay in the journal on the cultural practice of stylistic generation, to which no reference is made by Rosalind Coward.) The theoretical solution adopted is to locate the argument, so far as we were competent, firmly within a Gramscian problematic. This can hardly be a novel revelation, since Gramsci is openly and extensively signalled, including a discussion of such key concepts as hegemony, the 'passage from the structure to the complex superstructures', the requirement to identify, not 'whole classes', but class fractions and strata, class alliances, parties and the 'historical bloc'. Yet the problematic of Gramsci, which shapes our argument from end to end, is hardly anywhere acknowledged by the author. On the contrary, this is passed over in an eloquent silence, so that the fundamental non-reductionism of Gramsci, as we understand him, can be represented (ie mis-represented) as equivalent to the essentialism of Lukács's conception of class: presumably because Lukács is an easier target to tar with the idealist brush than Gramsci.

The fact is – as those who have read the article will know – that the whole argument *turns* on the identification, not of homogeneous 'whole classes' but of the contradictory location of class fractions and class strata. It depends on the quite specific refusal to represent cultural practices and forms as in any way 'given' by the economic level. We try, however inadequately, to show how, in the same conjuncture, different class fractions are 'represented' at the ideological level by different cultural practices: also how, at different conjunctures, the same (economic) class fraction can be articulated with different 'cultural solutions'. These 'non-correspondences' depend, in each case, we argue, on the specific historical conjuncture, its material conditions and the specific practices ('means of representation') by which they are re-presented and transformed at the cultural level. Far from working with fixed correspondences, our argument, if anything, could be faulted for its indeterminacy: since we were unable to specify precisely what were the conditions of existence which led any of the fractions to develop one 'practice', rather than another. How this whole argument about the non-reducibility of cultural forms to economic class location can be held to represent a theory of fixed correspondences between the economic and cultural levels passes understanding.

The same point may be made for the larger – but inevitably more sketchy – argument about the political dimension. Specifically, we

112 argued that there can be no 'given' or ascribed form of class consciousness (and thus no 'false' or 'true' consciousness) for any fraction of the working class: the different ideological configurations, again, depending on the means and conditions of their 'representation' at the political level. We even drew a crude diagram to suggest the range and variation of possible representational positions in the 'political repertoire'. The only attention this merits from the author is the vulgar judgement that we have somehow fallen into social-democratic or reformist politics.

Thus, in Rosalind Coward's selective representation, our attempt to show how structures shape and determine cultural formations – but in fundamentally displaced, non-identical ways – is presented as an idealist argument on behalf of 'free human consciousness'. The whole extended discussion of these cultural forms in terms of Althusser's category of 'imaginary relations' is excised, allowing the freedom to the author to represent us as arguing that consciousness is transparent. It is also said that we believe consciousness to be 'free of the action of structures' – an odd charge, since it is not only false, but squares oddly with the charge that we are 'class reductionist'. Where we speak of 'unconscious work' – 'that form of specific unconsciousness called "consciousness"' (Althusser, *For Marx*, London 1969, p 233) – we are accused of making consciousness primary and intentional. We go out of our way to show the error and abstractness of the notion of 'true' and 'false' class consciousness, only to be told that we 'posit a fixed reflection of the social order . . . producing a correct or incorrect ideological reading'. We are quoted as conceiving individuals in terms of their 'passage through the structures'. In the same paragraph, this is glossed to read that we deal with individuals as if they are 'exempt from the process of structures'.

There is no point multiplying the instances. The central thrust of our argument has been systematically transposed into its opposite. Lest this should appear as a blanket defence, we should say that there are several aspects of the piece which we would now want to modify or repudiate. It is a provisional sketch – no more. But, confronted by a caricature of what we actually said, we would want to defend, not every particular formulation, but the theoretical thrust and tendency which it represents. We agree without reservation that the problem of how to conduct a non-reductionist class analysis of cultural and ideological formations and practices constitutes an extremely difficult problem in our field of study: and our attempts in the *WPCS* 7/8 article are by no means satisfactory on this score. However, Rosalind Coward seems to us to be objecting, not to the way the argument is conducted, but more fundamentally to the theoretical project itself. And this may be the point to say that, although in her opening pages Rosalind Coward does imply that the tendency she repre-

sents (identified with *Screen*) needs to develop more fully the 113
'implications of these theories of representation for theories of culture analysed specifically in relation to class society' (p 75), the overall thrust of her critique is to suggest that the culture/class relation is not only 'problematic' – it is a non-starter. Such a question, it is suggested, is necessarily 'class-reductionist'. Thus, when she comes to advancing her own alternative position, this question altogether disappears, despite the early promises. We think this indicates – and not only in relation to this issue – a *general ambiguity* throughout her critique as to whether or not she does envisage herself as working within a marxist problematic; and, if so, what the status is of a 'reworking of Marxist theory' which lacks any pertinent, substantive reference to class practices and class struggle.

When we turn to the article on the *Panorama* programme in WPCS 9 we find a different picture. Here there are certain theoretical premises quite discrete from those which underpin the work in WPCS 7/8. The *Panorama* article is primarily concerned with the relations between the state and the media and the specificity of the particular televisual language produced in this process. Explicitly drawing upon Althusser's work on ideological apparatuses and Poulantzas's on the specific effectivity of the state, the article works to break with any simplistic notion of television 'bias' (still residually to be found in *Bad News*), as though simply directed by the 'ruling class'. In fact, on the contrary, so cautious were we in this respect that our argument about the *displacement* of state power through the specific ideological level of the televisual discourse could have been faulted for underplaying the connections and relations between the ideology of the televisual discourse and the ideologies of particular class fractions.

With the best will in the world, it is difficult for us to comprehend how this can be represented by Rosalind Coward as establishing a series of direct, non-mediated correspondences between the ruling class, the state and the media, with the result that – we are represented as saying – the 'neutral' signifying practices of the media directly reflect 'class interests'. This is absolutely contrary to the central argument of the *Panorama* piece. We were precisely concerned to demonstrate how the televisual discourse could *not* be 'read back', either to its class origins or – worse – to class interests. As we understand it, the concept of hegemony precisely intervenes against any attempt to return to the origins of an ideological practice in 'class interests'. In part, we tried to establish this non-reduction by showing the 'relative autonomy' both of practices and discourses at the level of signification – specifically, in terms of how the protocols of objectivity, neutrality, impartiality and balance served precisely as mechanisms of displacement, not only as a professionalised

114 practice, but as a specific set of strategies and interventions in the discourse itself. In part, we also tried to suggest that the 'relative autonomy' of television was articulated through the very specific relation of 'public service' television to the capitalist state. Again, it is significant that this specific question of the 'relative autonomy' of the capitalist state – a long, complex and pivotal theme in marxist theory and practice – is simply avoided or overlooked in Rosalind Coward's critique.

We also tried to suggest that the significations produced by the practices of the television discourse were produced within social practices, relations and apparatuses with a specific character and effectivity – in a specific relation of effectivity to the reproduction of the dominant ideology. But dominant ideologies cannot be reduced to the ideology of any single economic class, nor is there a functional unity between the discourses of television and any single class discourse, given at the level of the economic. Indeed, it is a fundamental premise of the marxist theory of the state that in capitalist social formations, the state is the site where the 'unity' of the dominant ideology, under the dominance of a leading fraction of capital, is *constructed*; and thus where hegemony is *secured*; this securing involving the role of the state in forming alliances, elaborating strategies which impose a unity on the competing fractions of capital, and thus sustaining the long-term conditions for expanded reproduction – frequently, *against* the particular 'class interests' of particular 'class fractions'. Our analysis was therefore aimed precisely at exploring the nature and conditions of this necessary displacement, and the means by which television disorganises the classes and the class struggle, through the presentation of its own unity, in the forms of 'nation/people', the 'general interest', 'democracy' etc. Far from expressing or reflecting an already given class interest, television is one of the sites where ideological elements and positions are *articulated into* a specific type of political class discourse.

It is certainly true that the article generalises too far and too freely, from political television in a specific conjuncture to television as such. It is also true – as she charges – that the article does not take us very far in the analysis of the specificity of televisual language. This is a marked weakness of the *Panorama* piece. However, it does not seem to us that Rosalind Coward takes us very far in this direction either. She is certainly concerned with 'signifying practice'. She is far less interested in the relation of or effects of signifying practice on, or its articulation with, any other instances of a social formation. And she is not at all concerned, except programmatically, with the specific differences between signifying practices, or their political and economic conditions of existence. The theory of signification she offers, far from taking us into the specificity of specific discourses, advances a very general, universalising, historically- or mode-unspecific

theory of the operation of Language, based on a particular reading of Lacan. Whereas in the *Panorama* piece an argument is conducted about the construction and effects of a specific signifying practice in a set of historically formed social relations at a specific conjuncture, Rosalind Coward *calls for more* on the specificity of the televisual discourse, but actually *offers* a theory of signification which has no particular reference to or pertinent effects for television as an ideological apparatus, the political discourse of the 1974 or any other specific conjuncture, or any theory concerning either the specific form of the capitalist state or the specific terms of the ideological class struggle in any of its forms. 115

'In so far as the signified, the represented, only exists as it is produced in signification, this development of theory no longer need look for a simple relation between the conditions of existence of the means of representation (economic and political determinants) and what is produced by the activity of those means. But this movement away from a 'represented exterior' of signifying practices towards a notion of the inscription of a subject position leaves the theory empty of any easy way of accounting for these representations in terms of a class analysis' (p 78).

Indeed, such a theory is so 'empty': empty of both a 'simple' and a complex way of making that relation, of both an 'easy' and a difficult way of accounting for anything except the absolute autonomy of signifying practice.

This is indeed the hub of the issue between us: the emphasis on the *absolute autonomy* of signifying practice. This stress seems to us to preclude the referencing of Language-in-general to any particular language, and to refuse any attempt to analyse signifying practices as part of the 'material factors which determine the cultural formation'. It is this real and substantive difference which allows Rosalind Coward to ignore specific arguments, elide specific positions, transform propositions into their opposite. Each of these steps is merely one moment in the unveiling of a counter-theory; and, though this only emerges at all clearly in the second half of her argument, it has really been the 'theoretical operator' of the critique all along: that against which we have been measured, judged and found wanting. Why the author found it necessary to use our two articles as stepping stones on this more exalted path remains something of an irritating mystery.

The alternative theory is constructed through two principal supports: a certain reading of Lacan, coupled with arguments derived from Paul Q Hirst's recent remarks (cf 'Althusser's theory of ideology', *Economy and Society*, vol 5 n 4, 1976) about the 'necessary non-correspondence' of the levels in a social formation. And here we do indeed have to concede. Our articles are neither Lacanian nor Hirstian. These are indeed complex bodies of theory in their own right; and both present critical problems

116 for any analysis which aims to 'contribute to a Marxist theory of the social formation'. Certainly, the 'materialism' of the former and the 'marxism' of the latter need to be demonstrated and argued through, rather than miraculously revealed, as is the case in this article.

These matters are too lengthy and complex to enter into fully here. But some things can be – and need to be – said, as an opening to further debate. The Lacanian propositions concerning the 'inscription of subject positions' *may* be an important contribution to a marxist theory of ideology – as Althusser tried, however unsuccessfully, to establish in the second half of his essay on the Ideological State Apparatuses (in *Lenin and Philosophy*, NLB, London 1971). But we retain severe doubts as to whether it can be *the whole* of such a theory. The proposition that ideology is grounded entirely through the inscription of subject positions, through discursive practices which are wholly autonomous, which have neither determinacy in, articulation with or pertinent specific effects for other levels of the social formation, is difficult to found within a problematic which at the same time declares itself to be marxist. The invariant and universal mechanism, identified by Lacan through a certain reading of Freud, through which the subject is variously positioned, *may* constitute a necessary (but not sufficient) precondition for a materialist theory of ideology. But these mechanisms would require, at the very least, to be made historically specific, and to be given some social dimension before the theory, in our view, meets the first requirements of a marxist problematic. The refusal of Lacanians either to recognise or to work on these problems would, by now, have constituted something of an intellectual scandal in a less religious climate. We know that Lacan himself has specifically refused this question – but then Lacan has never claimed to be working within a marxist problematic. His theory cannot therefore become 'materialist' by *fiat* or simple acclaim. Even the materialist glossing to which his theories have been subject seems to leave us at the level of Language-in-general, ideology-in-general – a form of abstraction which, as Marx suggested, produces only a 'chaotic conception' of the relations being appropriated:

'However, even though the most developed languages have laws and characteristics in common with the least developed, nevertheless, just those things which determine their development, ie the elements which are *not* general and common, must be separated out . . . ' (Marx, 1857 *Introduction*).

Further, if – as is argued here – it is incorrect to assign 'the dominant ideology' to a single ruling class, it is also incorrect to suggest that we can do without the notion of 'dominant' in defining an ideological field, or that every subject is positioned in the same ideological space through the same universal-unconscious

Actually, these implications of adopting a fully Lacanian position *do* give the author an odd moment of hesitation, but they don't effectively interrupt the flow of received doctrine. On p 96 it is remarked that the rejection of our kind of analysis 'still leaves us with the problem of what constitutes the determination on ideological instances as part of a social formation, and what can be said about class relations'. But this trail is nowhere further pursued. The problem is, however, in a manner, resolved:

'The analysis moves away definitively from the idea of the necessary dominance of the economic, found in the premises of economic base and corresponding superstructural formations, and also in the notion of "determination in the last instance" by the economic. It replaces these with a theory of the social formation as a "complex structure of social relations, a unity of economic, ideological and in certain cases political, structural levels in which the role of the economic is determinant"' (p 100).

All the contradictions in the argument seem to be condensed in these clearly formulated but theoretically incoherent sentences. First, it is odd to have our argument, which is founded on certain Althusserian propositions, refuted through a 'recovery' of rather banal Althusserian ground: especially when this reprise is made by someone who is elsewhere so fiercely anti-Althusserian. Second, this position is linked with that proposed by Hirst, though – unfortunately – it is one, derived from the problematic of structural causality, which in their latest work Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess have repudiated. In any event – third – the author seems unable to make up her mind whether, and in what sense, the 'economic' is still to be held in some way to 'determine'. Althusser, who as Rosalind Coward here implicitly acknowledges, has taken us a considerable distance along this road away from a simple determinacy by direct correspondences, into the terrain of non-corresponding *articulations*, has had (in his recent *Essays in Self-Criticism*) to acknowledge the consequences of pushing this problematic beyond the point where over-determination of *any* kind can be shown. Rosalind Coward has, in fact, been caught – as others before now have been – between Althusserian revisions. 'The conclusion is obvious: the position of the marxist topography [of base and superstructure] protects the dialectic against the delirious idealist notion of producing its own material substance: it imposes on it, on the contrary, the forced recognition of the material conditions of its own efficacy. These conditions are related to the definition of sites . . . to their limits, to their mode of determination in the "totality" of a social formation' (*Essays in Self-Criticism*, NLB, London 1976). And that brings us back, by a long detour, to the terrain of 'relative autonomy'.

Rosalind Coward's argument is therefore awkwardly suspended

118 between two incompatible positions: Althusser's necessary return to the limit position, for marxism, of 'relative autonomy' and 'determination in the last instance'; and Hirst's thrust beyond this limit position, into 'necessary non-correspondence' and the autonomy of the means of representation. Her argument is, to use a current phrase, theoretically unstable. She cannot hold both positions at once. The dilemma is resolved, not by demonstrating the convergence between Marx's and Lacan's problematic, but by declaring the latter to be 'materialist'.

The role of psychoanalysis in the development of theories of ideology and culture, and the relation between Freud and Marx, are now clearly on the agenda. This is a debate of considerable theoretical importance. The history of this 'reprise' of Freud within marxism is a complicated story; and, though it proves nothing, either way, about the compatibility of the two paradigms, the way the convergence has been established provides us with important clues about the course and character – above all the provincial tendency to fashion-following – of the current British 'marxist revival'. We can identify at least three sources: (1) the inadequate theorisation, within marxism, of the position of 'the subject' (not exclusively, it should be added, the 'speaking subject' but also the producing and consuming subject); (2) the relation of psychoanalysis to the development of feminist theory – a not unambiguous development, since it is only since the appearance of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* that English feminism has demonstrated itself as other than hostile to Freud; (3) Althusser's assertion that Freud's discovery of the 'continent' of the unconscious was of equal scientific status to Marx's discovery of the 'continent' of History; coupled with the use of certain Freudian terms and concepts by Althusser and Balibar, and Althusser's rather inconsequential 'Freud and Lacan' essay. This last has provided the principal warrant, not for the theoretical work now proceeding on Freud and Marx, but for the ritual invocation of Freud and Marx as two-headed theoretical twins. The irony here is that, although Althusser himself has been self-consciously 'depassed' (those who remain standing on his shoulders being now fashionably 'post-Althusserian'), it is Althusser's *fiat* which continues to support the assertion that marxism and psychoanalysis are coterminous. Who now recalls Balibar's careful assertion in *Reading Capital* (pp 243, 245): 'I am not interested here in the articulation of the objects of psychoanalysis and historical materialism but in the possibility of revealing epistemological analogies between Marx's theoretical work and Freud's. . . . Of course, there is no question of any correspondence between Freud's concepts and those of Marx . . .'. None of this should be taken as a position that the two problematics are mutually exclusive. But their compatibility has given marxism problems before now – and not only because those

variants of marxism were blindly reductionist. We insist, therefore, that there are real substantive problems involved in any proposed 'convergence'. And we believe that anyone who respects the scientific value of Freud and Marx must acknowledge this, and be prepared for open and unsectarian engagement with the issues. The compatibility between Lacan and Marx, with Freud as an unproblematic middle term, poses even greater problems. These problems will not be settled by the application of loyalty-tests. 119

There may be many variants of marxism. But there must be limit positions which allow us to identify the terrain of this problematic, distinguishing it from others. These positions may not be correct: they are certainly not sacred: they need to be interrogated and developed. But departures from them must be *marked* theoretically, precisely so as to bring out fundamental internal differences. We cannot simply borrow and ditch and conflate at will, nominating the resulting porridge 'Marxist' as we go. This is also true for psychoanalysis – which may have, in certain circumstances, to stand on its own feet, in its own right, without benefit of marxist support. Why is psychoanalysis the only Science which dare not speak its own name?

This is *not* an argument that there is no space for 'the subject' within marxism. But it is not self-evident that marxism stands or falls depending on whether or not it contains a theory of the 'speaking subject'. Marx's theory of capitalist production does not require – indeed, is specifically counterposed to – a theory of the 'working subject'. It therefore requires the utmost care where and how marxism is 'clarified' by the reintroduction of 'the subject': and the quotation marks are no absolute defence against an ultimate individualism. Such an interpellation, we believe, will be indicative of how 'the subject' is *constituted as a contradictory result* (perhaps along the lines of Marx's demonstration as to how the moment of exchange is constitutive of the 'economic subject' as an effect) – thus, the interpellation of the 'subject' in historically-specific positions (class positions, political-juridical positions, ideological positions) in historically constituted discourses and practices. To this, Freud may have a profound contribution to make. But the Freudian or Lacanian 'subject positions' cannot just be inserted anywhere. A theory of the positioning of 'the subject' in-general, in ideology-in-general, through Language-in-general, with no further reference to mode of production or social formation or conjuncture, can be *declared* to be 'Marxist' only if theory production consists wholly of successive acts of faith.

IAIN CHAMBERS	LIDIA CURTI
JOHN CLARKE	STUART HALL
IAN CONNELL	TONY JEFFERSON

This reply to my article on 'Class, "Culture" and the Social Formation' fails to engage fully with the central argument of that article; and it proceeds to represent – or re-present – the work criticised in my article in a different language and different theoretical framework to those in which the work was originally presented. My article was about the implications of work on signification for theories of ideology and the ideological instance. As such it aligned itself more closely with work, such as that of *Screen*, in which language is recognised as a problem, than with work which makes no such recognition. But it can in no way be construed as a sectarian defence of *Screen*, as the authors suggest. On the contrary the positions expressed are often implicitly and at times explicitly critical of *Screen's* work.

Ad feminam remarks aside, there are three main points in the reply which I should like to take up. These are: (1) the refusal to engage with what is being said about signification; (2) the contradiction between the accusation of sectarianism and the desire to return to definite 'limit-positions' within marxism; (3) the reliance of their argument on authority, an authority invested in certain patriarchal figures. It is not clear whether 'limit-positions' are guaranteed by a greater patriarch (Marx) or are fixed elsewhere.

The first point, the refusal to engage with what is being said about signification and language, has three important consequences for the reply to my article. Firstly, the authors seem not to understand the basis for discussion of their original articles in *WPCS*. These articles were criticised for using a notion of culture which was incompatible with a theory of signification and ideology as elaborated within semiology and more recently by Lacan, since it fell into all the traps which this work on signification has been able to show up. Secondly, this leads to a misunderstanding of what I had to say on the relation of signifying practices to the social formation as a whole. At no point do I even suggest the possibility of the absolute autonomy of signification. I simply argued that there are implications from recent work on signification for existing modes of understanding ideology/culture/representation. Thirdly, the refusal of the piece to engage with this work on signification leads to a hollow prescription for future work on marxism and psychoanalysis. I agree with the authors' resistance to any attempt unthinkingly to 'synthesise' Freud and Marx. However, I make it quite clear that the only point of convergence is the common problematic of representation/signification – a problematic which apparently is of no real concern to them.

On the second point, it is strange that what the authors ask for their own work is something that they do not grant to any other work. They want their original articles, which keep under-

going Protean transformations, to be seen as exploratory, examining different practices and their specificities. Yet my attempt to explore work that has been done on language and signification, and to assess its possible consequences for marxism at the moment – quite explicitly and as the central drift of the article – is immediately categorised as ‘sectarian’. At any rate, this accusation would still appear rather bizarre, since the article at no point appeals to an existing set of ‘beliefs’: it sets out explicitly asserting that marxism has had very little to say about a theory of signification, and as a result that in some parts it lends itself to some of those very idealist assumptions that have also haunted linguistics. The question then emerges whether this work on signification has any relevance for what has been developing recently as a theory of ideology in marxism; and if so, what are the implications for a theory of ideology if the recent developments in linguistics are taken into consideration.

The imputation of sectarianism is also strange in view of the desire expressed in the piece to return to some given and generally accepted marxist principles, which the piece fails to specify but which clearly hinge on an adherence to determination in the last instance and to the interpretation of other practices such as the ideological and the political as ‘relatively autonomous’ not just from each other but ultimately from the economic base. Despite the reworking of the articles under discussion to present them as having been ‘concerned to demonstrate how the television discourse could *not* be “read back” either to its class origins or – worse – to class interests’, this desire to produce a correspondence between economic classes and representations symptomatically returns in (contradictory) assertions such as ‘our argument . . . could have been faulted for underplaying the connections and relations between the ideology of television discourse and the ideologies of particular class fractions’, and ‘our argument could be faulted for its indeterminacy, since we were unable to specify precisely what were the conditions of existence which led class fractions to develop one practice rather than another’. Strangely, again, these pieces are defended as having dealt with the ‘non-correspondence’ of the ideological (or do they mean cultural?), yet in conclusion it is Paul Hirst’s ‘thrust’ into a concept of no necessary correspondence which is deemed to have gone beyond the limit-positions of marxism – something which is allegedly not on.

The only identification given of the ‘limit-positions’ is when Althusser is presented as sensibly recognising the limits in his recent ‘revisions’, and thus returning to his assertion of the relative autonomy of the instances, and the determination of the economy in the last instance. It is worth noting two points here. First, this vital ‘limit-position’ was qualified crucially by Althusser who was never prepared to uphold it more than to say ‘the lonely hour of the last instance never comes’. Secondly,

122 Althusser's acknowledging of 'limit-positions' (if such he does) can be seen as a work whose primary impetus is gained from very necessary *political* decisions in relation to the French Communist Party.

Such recognitions are important because they demonstrate that there is no such thing as 'limit-positions'. Mao's and Lenin's writings would have been dismissed as being outside their contemporary 'limit-positions'. The contemporary implications of this notion are also clear: members of the women's movement are to crawl back into their corners suitably reproved for attempting to theorise those things which Marx never bothered with. The centrality of the conception of class is clearly problematic for feminism since it is difficult to accept either the idea of women as a class since economic class divisions cut across women as much as men; neither is it helpful to conclude that just because marxist theorisation is inadequate, we should relegate questions of the positions of women to secondary positions of class. Questions such as the organisation of sexuality do arise. And marxism has as yet nothing to say about them. Socialist-feminist theory has been exploring areas that have not been developed by traditional marxism. For any marxist grouping to dismiss these as not corresponding to 'limit-positions' can only be destructive. All this is to argue that what the reply proposes as absolute guarantees of marxism, its 'limit-positions', are almost invariably areas of political disagreement, and indeed of political position itself.

It is perhaps the implications of different political strategies which underly the often excessive response to the sort of ideas I outlined in my article. What is at stake is not just different interpretations of Marx. It is whether transformations at the economic level are given absolute priority over struggles within political and ideological instances which could form the pre-conditions for a transformation to socialism. The retention of the idea that the economy is ultimately determinant and that other instances have a necessary correspondence (even if this is displaced by the workings of hegemony) is to invest in a particular political position. Here, work on, for example, ideological instances is guaranteed as important because it has a necessary relation with the economic, and it is only at the economic level that major transformations can occur. It would perhaps be more useful for the debate to deal with these issues directly rather than attempting to prove a mythical notion of 'limit-positions' within marxism.

My final, and related point, is simply to question the reliance of the reply on the figure of theoretical authority. My article is 'suspended awkwardly' between Althusser's revisions and Paul Hirst's 'thrust' beyond the horizons of existing marxism. I find it difficult to understand why the work cannot be taken, as it was intended, as necessary and quite preliminary work on signification and marxist theories of ideology.

Dear Screen,

I should like to welcome the initiative of Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow in paying detailed attention to a standard-output TV programme, *Yesterday's Truants* (Screen, Summer 1977). However, since they themselves express the hope of making 'an immediate intervention . . . with those working in television,' may I respond by trying to articulate one or two misgivings.

My doubts find a focus in the question, posed *vis-à-vis* the sequence of Vincent in the 'past': 'What has the close-up of the end of a rifle to do with the problem of truancy?' The short answer is, of course, nothing; but it has a great deal to do with the conventions within which sequences of hunting, and in particular of ambush, are traditionally presented in the fiction cinema. Having been the film editor on the original (1971) truancy programme, from which this and other sections were lifted for the 1976 follow-up, I am able to be fairly explicit (as explicit as memory permits) about the meanings which it assumed for us at the time of its making. First of all, as Heath and Skirrow point out, the sequence was staged. This being so – for various reasons, including the reluctance of the mice to brave the spotlights – it seemed important that it should be presented as a staged sequence: and this determined the selection, in shooting and in editing, of set-ups which were clearly *not* those from which one would have sought to obtain *vérité* footage of Vincent waiting for the mice to emerge but which were, equally clearly, representative of received conventions. Further, however: if these conventions were to be *seen* to posit the sequence as staged – ie if the devices of fiction were to be employed not only to encode a fiction but also to posit its nature as fiction – they would have to be somewhat over-stressed, super-saturated with meaning, enforced beyond the immediately apparent requirements. Hence the slow pan along the rifle barrel, the matching zooms and so forth.

The primary aim, then, was to present this as a sequence about Vincent *acting out* his habitual behaviour, and thus to recover its documentary perspective. But, having been led to push our language in the direction of parody, we allowed ourselves to

124 entertain the hope that this parodic quality might open up precisely the sort of gap between signifier and signified which Heath and Skirrow, in their comments upon *Ici et ailleurs*, deem desirable: a gap in which the viewer might construct from the contradiction, if only as a fleeting irony, such questions as, 'How does this activity measure against the heroic myths of hunting?' or, conversely, 'Is there any more substance in such myths than in what we are now seeing?' Oddly enough, the Heath/Skirrow formulation ('What has the close-up of the end of a rifle to do with the problem of truancy?') comes close to such an interrogation; but they seem somehow deaf to the resonances of their own response.

Comments similar to the above apply to the Linda sequence, except that here the conventions parodied – those of the pop music programme – may more plausibly be seen as articulating cultural values imputed to the girl herself. Again, as with the Vincent sequence, Heath and Skirrow elect to perceive the style as 'innocent' rather than as making its distinct contribution to the sense. This reading is not, of course, prohibited by the film's structure. But here the problems are compounded by the fact that, where we thought we were using the pseudo-pop sequence to suggest Linda's self-conscious fashion-consciousness, they see in it a direct invitation to sexist enjoyment. The status of such an interpretation puzzles me. Are Heath and Skirrow saying that such enjoyment informed their own response to the programme (which seems unlikely), or that it is an available option (which is no doubt true, but which leaves arguing percentages of the population likely to take it up) or that it is in some absolute sense a component of the programme's meaning even if *nobody* actually experiences it that way? Is it seriously to be suggested that shots of a girl admiring her clothes in a mirror are not a legitimate means of signifying adolescent narcissism as mediated through a consumer culture and mythologised in pop-shows?

In adducing data from the film-makers' experience – information about what we thought we were doing when we constructed these sequences – my purpose is not to characterise the Heath/Skirrow analysis as mistaken or inadequate, and certainly not to claim authorial privilege in interpretation. Statements of the film-makers' intention would have no relevance whatever were it not for one crucial fact: that the modes of signification used in this and comparable programmes are preferred by the television establishment, and enjoined upon its practitioners with much expenditure in executive manpower, precisely on account of their supposed comprehensibility, ie their transparency to authorial meaning. Moreover, such transparency seems reciprocally to be assumed, at times explicitly, by Heath and Skirrow: witness the ease with which they slide from the construction of meanings to the attribution of intent, as in the comment that 'it is not by chance' that

a welfare worker supposedly denigrated is a woman, or that a long-shot of the locale represents 'a moment of guilty conscience almost'. And here I return again to the question, 'What has the close-up of the end of a rifle to do with the problem of truancy?' For this question seems, in seeking a direct relation between the concrete shot and the abstract definition of subject-matter, to demand an answer in terms of that very appropriation of the world to symbol – 'appropriation' in the sense that meaning is generated almost entirely by function within semantic context and only vestigially by prior circumstance – wherein, as Heath and Skirrow so cogently demonstrate in relation to the appropriation of time, we may detect the operations of ideology. There are thus moments when the Heath/Skirrow analysis seems locked within the problematic which it decries. But if, as my testimony suggests, simple meanings cannot be transmitted reliably even between seasoned practitioners and commentators thoroughly versed in the filmic culture, then we ought surely to ditch the assumption of transparency altogether.

We need hardly be distressed at the thought that those practices employed by the television institution in pursuit of its ideological purposes – of which transparency, within given limits, is an essential component if the attempt to insinuate a specific construction of meanings is to be presented as an openness to the transmission of all meanings – may prove inadequate to those purposes. What does worry me, however, is the assumption of universality which mars the otherwise excellent Heath/Skirrow work. The concept of 'signifying practices' is attractive as an alternative to the conception of television as 'communication', this latter being hegemonic in that it conceals an assumption, in the presentation of the linguistic means as neutral, of *their* right to define reality for *us*. But if the intentionality of the viewer is not taken into account, at the very least to the extent of being acknowledged, there is surely a danger that 'signifying practices' may serve to recuperate 'communication' at another level – a level at which it will be easy for the hostile observer to argue that the critics have merely inscribed their own ideology – with the functions therein attributed to the television apparatus – into their reading of the programme.

Briefly: if the meaning of a text is held to be the same for everybody, then the distinction between a reality constructed in language and a reality neutrally transmitted by language becomes trivial and, in the pejorative sense, academic.

With good wishes,

DAI VAUGHAN

In our turn, we should like to welcome Dai Vaughan's response to 'Television: a world in action' as a real contribution to the debate which we hoped would develop from the article. The following remarks briefly take up one or two of the issues raised in the interests of focussing what seems to us to be a crucial problem.

The staging of the 'truant playing truant' scenes was, as Vaughan allows, clearly emphasised by us (notably in connection with the 'dramatically bizarre' Vincent presentation but substantially also with regard to the depiction of Linda and Keith); important in that emphasis – on the scenes *as scenes* – was its place within the more general stress laid throughout the article on the multiplicity characteristic of the movement of the television programme (cf eg pp 27-28). The scenes are not, of course, merely elements which go to make up such a multiplicity; they themselves demonstrate it, are individually marked by it. At the lowest level of complexity (we can only refer readers back to the detail of the analyses provided on pp 27-32), each is both a scene for itself, a little drama or narrative, with its own time and unity, available for its own particular attention, meaning and enjoyment, and the perspective of a documentary report, a certain claim for a presence of fact, for 'reality', the images accompanied by a commentary, the discretely unlocated voice of their truth. Which is one point at which questions can be posed: for example, 'What has the close-up of the end of a rifle to do with the problem of truancy?'

Film editor of the original material, Vaughan answers that there was an intention of irony. We were not altogether deaf to the resonances of this in the programme, not at least to the exaggeration or 'parodic quality' mentioned by Vaughan (but what exactly would be the gain of the viewer measuring Vincent's shown activities against the heroic myths of hunting or vice versa? what is the similarity here with our example from *Ici et ailleurs?*); indeed, we pointed quite specifically to such 'super-saturation' as a potential loss of balance, thus of documentary credibility ('the over-obliging mouse' p 29). Simply, however, and Vaughan refers to the constant necessity to 'recover' the 'documentary perspective', balance is held to, credibility is worked for; which again is the point of our question, a recognition, *critically* (as we said: the question is impossible for the programme and for its viewer p 29), of the play between topic and programme, of television in action. The same locus of question (the best way we can find to put it) is at stake in the Linda scene: this is Linda playing truant (and . . . the reality of adolescent female narcissism); this

is a scene of music and movement and the body and rhythm, a whole spectacle. What slips in Vaughan's account is the turn of those two enunciations together: for the programme, that is, there is no break of contradiction between 'using the pseudo-pop sequence to suggest Linda's self-conscious fashion consciousness' and 'a direct invitation to sexist enjoyment' – and the absence of a break, of any contradiction, is television itself, as Vaughan makes explicit in the revealing passage where he insists on the match between the intended ironies or saturations of the film-editor and the modes of signification enjoined upon television's practitioners with much expenditure in executive manpower. The effects summarised in the word 'pseudo' ('pseudo-pop sequence') are no more than another strand of multiplicity along with which the documentary question can still be posed and into which it runs: 'Is it seriously to be suggested that shots of a girl admiring her clothes in a mirror are not a legitimate means of signifying adolescent narcissism as mediated through a consumer culture and mythologised in pop shows?' What we in fact tried to suggest was that this is *precisely* a legitimate television means, the result of which is yet another well-made programme, with the turn together of 'documentary' and 'scene' providing the required multiplicity in order (the order from which it has often been said to us in discussions that Linda is presented like that because that is what she – young girls – are like; to which we reply, as in the article itself, that the *presentation* has strictly *nothing* to do with Linda).

This is to begin to come up against the crucial problem involved. Finally, Vaughan's comments are still caught in the communication model which our analysis of the programme set out to displace; a communication model that calls for, as adequate concepts in the analysis: sender (Vaughan's comments as editor) and receiver (his speculations about us as viewers, his reference to calculating percentages likely to take up meanings, and so on), with between them an area of transmission within which, symptomatically, transparency emerges as a key issue (the term 'transparency' is nowhere used in our article). Consider here the remark concerning sexist enjoyment: 'Are Heath and Skirrow saying that such enjoyment informed their own response to the programme (which seems unlikely) or that it is an available option (which is no doubt true, but which leaves arguing percentages of the population likely to take it up) or that it is in some sense a component of the programme's meaning even if *nobody* actually experiences it that way?' The whole formulation must be challenged: sexism is not a simple faculty of response, the province of some and not of others; it is first and foremost a social fact (economic, political, ideological), the articulation and experience of which then certainly differs as amongst classes, groups, individuals. What really seems most likely in this respect is that our response to the

128 programme *was* informed by sexism: one is non-sexist in our society *in relation to* sexism, not 'before' or 'outside' it. There is no need here to argue percentages, imagine 'nobody'/'everybody' or whatever, since the problem is not one of either 'universality' or 'the intentionality of the viewer', the latter being what Vaughan wishes to reinsert into the analysis as against our 'assumption' of the former. If mention of the intentionality of the viewer is a statement to the effect that a viewer is an individual with a particular history, exists actively in a social situation with specific class and sexual contradictions, the reality of which enters into the 'reception' of any programme, into the experience of what is seen and heard, then we nowhere wanted to deny it. At the same time, however, that mention must not be allowed to produce the habitual deadlock in which, to take up the formulation in Vaughan's last paragraph, either 'the meaning of a text is held to be the same for everybody' or, equally weak (and the end of any politically consequent analysis), 'the meaning of a text is held to be different for everybody' (or 'the same for nobody'). The universality we may have assumed was a social universality, that of television as an institution in its production of contexts and terms of meaning, its construction of intelligibility, of the grounds from which difference is defined and experienced. It was thus that we tried to grasp television in its action, tried to demonstrate something of its determinations, of its structures of movement and functioning (tried to do that much more than to specify meanings, let alone 'the meaning'; the question for us was to indicate television's conditions and limits of meanings in the programme). Vaughan is right to raise the issues he does but the crucial problem is that of how to avoid returning to the simple model he himself reproduces in the way in which he raises them, of how to analyse effectively, in their material force, the terms of television's action. The article was no more than a start in that direction.

STEPHEN HEATH
GILLIAN SKIRROW